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THE CHANGING CANONS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY RUSSIAN POETRY

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Alexandra Smith and David N. Wells

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ALEXANDRA SMITH AND DAVID N. WELLS

RECONFIGURING THE CANON: THE CHANGING CONTEXTS OF
TWENTIETH-CENTURY RUSSIAN POETRY

Literary canons, in the sense of ‘a shared understanding of what literature is worth preserving’,¹ are created and constantly revised in the light of changing perceptions of what literature is ontologically and in relation to the societies within which it exists, and in response to the languages, methods and technical approaches that writers adopt at any given literary-historical moment. Nowhere is this competitive drive to create a ‘usable past’ more evident than in the Russian literature of the twentieth century. The focus of the years before the October Revolution on mutually contradictory Symbolist, post-Symbolist and Futurist agendas gave way to divergences between Soviet and émigré writing on the one hand, and Soviet and dissident writing on the other. The post-Soviet literary space of the 1990s saw a further rejection of the past and often a return to earlier models. Each reinvention saw the development of its own narrative and its own canon.

The most self-conscious and pervasive of these reinventions, the birth of Socialist Realism in 1932, was explicitly entwined with the Stalinist leadership’s attempts at social transformation and the creation of the new Soviet person. As David Hoffmann notes, ‘in addition to its policy of industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernisation, the Stalinist government sought to instill socialist values in all members of society and to transform human nature itself’. This attempt at human transformation, argues Hoffmann, ‘represents a particular socialist version of the more general En-

¹ Ohmann, Richard, ‘The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction 1960-1975’, in: Hallberg, Robert von (ed.), *Canons*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 397.

lightenment impulse to remake and improve society'.² At the same time, Hoffmann points out that the declaration of the 17th Party Congress in 1934 that socialism had been built should not be seen as an assertion simply that old forms of artistic expression had been mechanically replaced by new ones. The achievement of socialism in fact encouraged the selective use of the past – of traditional institutions and culture – to support and further the new order. As Hoffmann writes: 'Monumentalist art and architecture, formerly instruments of the old order, now helped legitimate the new socialist order and symbolized its accomplishments. Patriotic appeals, elsewhere used to foment bourgeois nationalism, in the Soviet Union inspired defense of the socialist motherland'.³ Yet although the ethics of socialist realism remained dominant throughout the Soviet period, in fact Soviet culture was by no means monolithic, as has been made clear in several studies on Stalinist and post-Stalin cultural developments.⁴

The situation observed by Gerald Smith that an official canon of poets was constructed by the Union of Soviet Writers bureaucracy and by loyal critics and academics who promoted it through textbooks and the broadcasting media⁵ implies that the existence of strict boundaries between official and unofficial writing, even if these varied over time, was clear to writers and readers alike. As Smith notes, the official poetic canon manifested itself in the *Biblioteka poeta* (Poet's Library) series. This be-

² Hoffmann, David. L., 'Was There a "Great Retreat" from Soviet Socialism? Stalinist Culture Reconsidered', *Kritika*, 5.4/2004, 653.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See, for example, Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; Walker, Barbara, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005; Lygo, Emily, *Leningrad Poetry 1953-75: The Thaw Generation*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2010.

⁵ Smith, G.S., 'Russian Poetry since 1945', in: Cornwell, Neil (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 200.

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gan to be undermined, however, by the emergence of the post-Soviet *Novaia biblioteka poeta* (New Poet's Library) series, launched in 1995, and intended to accommodate twentieth-century Russian poets who did not attain high political recognition and who were often victimised by the regime. As Smith suggests, 'many persons who became outstanding poets rather than rank-and-file journeymen under the Soviet system [...] seem to have advanced themselves largely outside the official system of nurture by making contact with a guru' who would offer her/his patronage.⁶

In their co-edited book on the twentieth-century poetic canon in the post-Soviet period, Katharine Hodgson and Alexandra Smith discuss the emergence of several canons (including pedagogical and personal canons) in the 1990s following the influx of previously unpublished and suppressed texts. These underpin the diversity of the post-Soviet literary landscape created by the rediscovery of Thaw poetry, émigré writing and the unofficial poetry of the 1970s and 1980s. Commenting on Dmitrii Bykov's textbooks on Soviet literature published in 2012 and 2014,⁷ Hodgson and Smith observe that the significant influence of popular culture on Russian literary trends triggered the re-evaluation of the Soviet-era vision of the canon as monolithic and authoritative. They conclude that 'Bykov's idiosyncratic approach suggests that a more democratic, flexible, and inclusive understanding of the literary canon is starting to take root' and characterise his vision of an all-inclusive canon as 'something on which we can all have our opinions'.⁸

⁶ Ibid., p. 199.

⁷ Bykov, Dmitrii, *Sovetskaia literatura: kratkii kurs*, Moscow: Prozaik, 2012; Bykov, Dmitrii, *Sovetskaia literatura: rasshirennii kurs*, Moscow: Prozaik, 2014.

⁸ Hodgson, Katharine and Smith, Alexandra, 'Introduction: Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry and the Post-Soviet Reader: Reinventing the Canon', in: Hodgson, Katharine, Shelton, Joanne and Smith, Alexandra (eds), *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017, p. 42.

The present collection of articles provides several examples of shifting attitudes towards the twentieth-century poetic canon. It also reinforces the idea that the notion of canonicity found in the works of several important poets and in the reception of Russian poetry in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods was more fluid than static. The case studies offered in the present collection of articles thus support Katerina Clark's view of Soviet culture as a cultural ecosystem comprising different competing trends. Such a view emphasises the absence of a universal blueprint for socialist culture and enables the view of Soviet culture as a dynamic system that could change in relation to socio-economic changes in the Soviet Union. It also suggests that insisting on a sharp dichotomy between intellectuals and the Party precludes any nuanced understanding of the cross-fertilisation that in fact occurred between official and unofficial cultures. Clark rejects the view of Soviet culture as something that was formed by the Party in a Bronze Horseman-like manner and resulted in the imposition of Socialist Realism 'upon an unsuspecting intelligentsia'.⁹ Clark believes that there was 'no absolute agency in the evolution of Soviet culture' and goes on to say that 'any renegotiation of the ratio of center and periphery (canonical and noncanonical) takes place within the existing language, as cultural revolution can only occur within a given ecosystem'.¹⁰ Such a vision of Soviet culture as an evolving system is especially helpful in the re-evaluation of the twentieth-century poetic canon owing to the fact that poetic texts can be easily memorised, and are thus easily capable of transgressing geographical and political boundaries, including censorship and self-censorship.¹¹

⁹ Clark, Katerina, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010, p. 11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gronas, Mikhail, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 82.

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The analysis of Tsvetaeva's 1934 memoir about Andrey Bely offered here shows well how Soviet and émigré readers were appreciative of the importance of Russian and European modernist culture for the formation of new aesthetic renderings of reality. Tsvetaeva's story offers an evolutionary view of Russian poetry and challenges ideological restrictions that obstruct creative dialogue between different branches of Russian literature. Her vision of Bely as an important Russian modernist writer rather than a Soviet writer might be seen as an attempt to fill the gap in Russian collective memory at a time in the 1920s and 1930s when Russian modernist ideas were suppressed in the Soviet Union and often also frowned upon by editors of major émigré journals. Olga Sobolev's discussion of the use of Blok's image and poetry in Soviet films also points to the existence of competing views of the poetic canon. It demonstrates how in the post-war period Blok was canonised by the Soviet intelligentsia as a marker and a bearer of cultural capital that allowed the intelligentsia to reclaim some of its earlier social prestige. The use of Blok's poetry in Soviet films, Sobolev argues, incorporated this social group's opposition to restrictive official attitudes towards culture and to the limitations of the Soviet canon. Zakhar Ishov's and Denis Akhapkin's articles on Brodsky also illustrate an attempt to bypass the Socialist Realist canon and to use canonical English and Italian poetry as models for emulation. Similarly, Josephine von Zitzewitz analyses the strategies of self-canonisation found in the works of the poets belonging to the Leningrad Underground group of poets who were active between the 1970s and 1990s. Their ironic appropriation of Soviet literary themes and devices, even as they emulated Soviet models of literary organisation, prompted their readers to reconsider existing poetic canons promoted by official poets and critics. Georgina Baker's interpretation of Il'ia Kutik's interest in epic poetry suggests that Kutik's ongoing engagement with Homer is linked occasionally to the revival of the eighteenth-century Russian ode. Baker's observes that in Kutik's poem

‘Luk Odisseia’ (‘Odysseus’ Bow) ode and epic are diminished from their role in his models Horace and Homer, reflecting the disruption of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kutik’s emigration, and offers a new approach to the use of neo-classical themes by contemporary Russian poets in the context of their reassessment of the imperial legacy. Taking a broad perspective, Olga Voronina’s survey of new trends in Russian museum culture highlights a shift from the passive absorption of official narratives about poets’ lives to non-monumental interactive approaches to the past that enable post-Soviet visitors to experience the contextual setting of their favourite poetic works. As Voronina puts it, ‘post-Soviet cultural history is now in the making, and there is a chance that literary memorials will be in the vanguard of its formation’. It can be added to Voronina’s observation, that the contribution of literary museums to the formation of the new poetic canon/s is also indicative of the emergence of a post-Soviet subjectivity oriented towards a more democratic use of cultural heritage and creative appropriation of the past.

ALEXANDRA SMITH

CONSTRUCTING THE MODERNIST VISION OF TIME: TSVETAeva's RENDERING OF
BELY'S DYNAMIC WORLDVIEW IN *A CAPTIVE SPIRIT*

Andrei Bely (Boris Bugaev, 1880-1934) is often praised as one of the most important innovators in the history of twentieth-century European and Russian fiction, poetry and literary theory. Yet he is not well known in the West due to the lack of translations of his works into English and the inherent difficulty of his writings. Gerald Janecek, in his 1978 introduction to a collection of articles on Bely, maintains that in Russia Bely 'has not become the property of academic circles in his native language because his ideas are still considered politically unacceptable'.¹ Although the post-Soviet period is characterised by a steadily increasing upsurge of interest in Bely's life and works, in the West he continues to be seen as a highly difficult writer to comprehend. Steven Cassedy's observation about the reception of Bely in Russia and in the West captures well the contradictory nature of Bely's thought and aesthetic views. Cassedy aptly points out that at any given moment Bely subscribed 'to any number of different and sometimes conflicting philosophical and aesthetic systems, and over time he altered the mix of systems'.² In Cassedy's view, any attempt 'to establish a unified terminology for describing Bely's thought in general and his aesthetic system in particular' can be compared to trying to hit a moving target located 'in seven different places simultaneously'. Indeed, Bely's eclectic worldview encompasses various

¹ Janecek, Gerald, 'Introduction', in Janecek, Gerald (ed.), *Andrei Bely: A Critical Review*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978, p. 1.

² Cassedy, Steven, Review of: Keys, Roger, *The Reluctant Modernist: Andrei Belyi and the Development of Russian Fiction, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), *Modern Philology*, 96.3/1999, 412.

influences, including the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, Pavel Florenskii, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein and Russian neo-Kantians such as Aleksandr Vvedenskii, and Sergei and Evgenii Trubetskoi. These Russian thinkers appropriated Nikolai Lobachevskii's non-Euclidean geometrical system for their ideas about the simultaneous existence of diverse spaces such as the noumenal and physical realms.³ In their polemical works on German neo-Kantianism published in the 1910s, they advocated the view that philosophy cannot be reduced to methodology because knowledge has an ontological and metaphysical basis. Like Russian neo-Kantians, Bely regarded belief and creativity as cognitive tools for understanding the truth.

Both Tsvetaeva and Bely had close ties with Russian neo-Kantian philosophers in the 1910s-1920s, including Nikolai Berdiaev and Evgenii Trubetskoi. Trubetskoi investigated the personalistic nature of cognition of reality – overlooked by Kant – and concluded that in every act of consciousness the self both affirms itself and goes out beyond itself. As Trubetskoi elucidates, the act of judgement presupposes a knowledge of oneself that 'goes beyond subjective representation to the trans-subjective realm', linking thereby one's own individual judgment with the absolute.⁴ Trubetskoy's idea is developed in Tsvetaeva's 1923 cycle 'Poety' ('Poets'): it suggests that the poet's mission is to challenge Kant. Tsvetaeva in her 1934 memoir *Plennyi dukh (A Captive Spirit)* portrays Bely as a Russian thinker and poet whose engagement with Kant and neo-Kantianism enabled him to develop a unique vision of time as a form of inner sense. Her memoir uncovers the primacy of the visual in Rus-

³ A comprehensive discussion of the influence of non-Euclidean geometry and Russian neo-Kantian philosophy on Bely's evolutionary theory is provided in: Kosalowska, Elizabeth, 'On the Crossroads of Science, Philosophy, and Literature', unpublished PhD thesis, New York: Columbia University, 2013, pp. 1-25.

⁴ Meerson, Michael A., 'Put' Against Logos: The Critique of Kant and Neo-Kantianism by Russian Religious Philosophers in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century', *Studies in East European Thought*, 47.3-4/1995, 239.

TSVETAeva's RENDERING OF BELY'S WORLDVIEW

sian modernism after 1910 and explores the new kind of observer created by changing cultural conditions.

Tsvetaeva's memoir offers new ways of thinking about visual relations, including habits of perception and the cultural construction of vision. The use of Bely's two photographs in *Plennyi dukh* enables the narrator to talk about the power of the photographic image to create a sense of connection not only with the past but also with the imaginary, transcendental other world. By making readers participate in another person's mortality and mutability, Tsvetaeva creates a community of mourners who collectively lament the death of the poet. As an elegiac art, Susan Sontag affirms, photography actively promotes nostalgia by reminding the viewer about a person who has 'aged or decayed or no longer exists'. Sontag's statement that 'all photographs are memento mori'⁵ is fully applicable to Tsvetaeva's descriptions of the Bely photographs in her memoir: they articulate Tsvetaeva's conception of loss. Molly Blasing's observation that Tsvetaeva's interpretation of the Bely photographs visualises 'a transgression of boundaries between the living and the world beyond'⁶ points to the ethical concerns embedded in Tsvetaeva's memoir. By teaching us a new visual code, photographs contribute to our understanding of ethics of seeing. They prompt us to think about what we are looking at and 'what we have a right to observe'.⁷ Tsvetaeva's memoir has an ethical goal, too. It directs the reader away from the sensationalist images of contemporary media towards a private commemorative event that celebrates the life of an important modernist writer who would have been forgotten in the Soviet Union. In the late 1920s-early 1930s, Soviet authorities saw Bely as an anach-

⁵ Sontag, Susan, 'In Plato's Cave': *On Photography*, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 15.

⁶ Blasing, Molly Thomasy, 'Marina Tsvetaeva and the Visual Arts', in: Forrester, Sibelan (ed.), *A Companion to Marina Cvetaeva*, Brill: Leiden, 2017, p. 227.

⁷ Sontag, 'In Plato's Cave', p. 3.

ronistic author whose works were not consistent with the spirit of socialism and Soviet culture. It is not a coincidence that the concluding part of Tsvetaeva's memoir refers to a memorial service at St. Sergii's church in Paris organised by several Russian émigrés, including Vladislav Khodasevich and Father Sergei Bulgakov. She describes it as the Orthodox final farewell to the burned man (she uses the adjective *sozhzhennyi* that could be applied both to a cremated body and to an overburdened person). The description of the church service portrays the Russian émigré community as being fully committed to its mission to preserve Russian pre-revolutionary culture and to develop it further. That is why Tsvetaeva's story attempts to construct a Russian modernist canon by further developing several tenets of modernist writing and by portraying Bely as an exciting practitioner of the new mode of writing. Tsvetaeva reminds her readers that Bely's way of destabilising syntactical structures and visual presentation of verbal messages collapses the temporal and spatial structures found in realist narratives.

In her memoir, Tsvetaeva links the representation of temporality in art to the artist's inner experience. Bely's psychic life is portrayed in the story as part of the creative transformation of chaos with the help of Logos. The aforementioned cycle 'Poety' also implies that the modern poet is preoccupied with psychic life and subjectivity: he cannot talk about life in general as an abstraction in the manner of Kant. Tsvetaeva's allusion to Kant in 'Poety' might be seen as a veiled homage to Bely, with whom she spent several days in Berlin in summer 1922. It also looks strikingly different from the attempt of Soviet authorities in the 1920s to suppress religious and idealist philosophy, as exemplified by Nadezhda Krupskaya's 1923 circular sent to all public libraries in the Soviet Union ordering them to remove from the shelves any obsolete and counter-revolutionary authors such as Plato, Kant, Lev Tolstoi and Vladi-

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mir Solov'ev.⁸ As will be demonstrated below, Tsvetaeva in her story about several encounters and creative dialogues with Bely shares Bely's belief that Marx's theory of historical necessity is incompatible with individual creativity.⁹ She portrays Bely as a Russian and European modernist rather than as a Soviet writer. She describes his spontaneity and psychoanalytic approaches to creativity as being superior to the Soviet ideological concerns with self-censorship and self-control discussed in literary criticism and the media in the 1930s. As Vaughan James points out, Socialist Realism was an extension of Stalin's propaganda: 'it was invented by Stalin, Zhdanov and Gorky and forced on the unwilling artists in the early thirties by the formation of the artistic unions'.¹⁰

By describing Bely sympathetically in Berlin as an absent-minded individual who loses his manuscript in a café and who blames Rudolf Steiner for this devil's trick, believing that the Doctor gave the order for the manuscript to disappear, Tsvetaeva portrays her fellow poet as being attentive to issues more profound than the trivia of everyday life. The poet's imagination is shown as easily triggered by unexpected associations and the intuitive cognition of life rather than by abstract thinking in the style of Marxist dogma or a Kantian notion of intelligence that advocates the superiority of objective scientific laws to human experience.¹¹ The structures of narrative viscosity in *Plennyi dukh* – the collapse of the actual, the virtual and the spatial form of the memoir – reproduce a time that emerges, suggesting thereby that Tsvetaeva coalesces the perspective of the memoirist with the perspective of the poet who teaches

⁸ Karlinsky, Simon, *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Woman, Her World and Her Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 114.

⁹ Elsworth, J.D., *Andrey Bely: A Critical Study of the Novels*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 12.

¹⁰ James, C. Vaughan, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973, p. x.

¹¹ Bergson, Henri, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1998, pp. 230-231.

the reader to view time through the prism of Henri Bergson's duration. It can be described as a personal experience of constant becoming that constitutes an overlapping of the past and the present. As conscious activity, claims Bergson, life might be seen as an invention and 'unceasing creation'.¹² Tsvetaeva's memoir poses several important questions about the nature of time and the potential of a narrative to show the texture of intangible time in images. What looks like a search for a form in which narrative can imprison time might be also seen as a search for timelessness.

Tsvetaeva's memoir has two distinct parts: 'Predshestvuiushchaia legenda' ('A Preceding Legend') and 'Vstrecha' ('The Encounter'). While the first part focuses on Tsvetaeva's interactions with Bely and the members of the group of writers, thinkers and critics associated with the Musaget publishing house, it refers occasionally to places outside Moscow, including Tarusa, Germany, and Italy. The second part comprises a vivid reconstruction of Tsvetaeva's meetings with Bely in Berlin, references to their correspondence, quotes from the poems of both poets and Tsvetaeva's response to the obituary on Bely's death. It also discusses the two photographs of Bely published by the influential émigré newspaper *Poslednie novosti*. The narrative does not have a linear structure and comprises a collage of different episodes, meditative passages and several fragments of conversations with or about Bely.

Tsvetaeva met Bely in Moscow on several occasions in the 1910s. These meetings include various gatherings organised by the Musaget publishing house in which her friend Lev Kobylinskii (Ellis) was involved. Yet the significant part of her memoir describes Bely in Berlin rather than in Moscow. A few facts related to the meetings in Moscow are mentioned very briefly. The memoir gives an impression that Tsvetaeva was introduced to Bely by Ellis in 1909. Shortly afterwards she gained entry through Ellis and Voloshin to Briusov's *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki* (Society

¹² Ibid., p. 23.

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of Free Aesthetics) and to the Musaget publishing house. According to Ute Stock, these early interactions with Russian Symbolists shaped Tsvetaeva's ethical outlook for many years to come.¹³ Yet Tsvetaeva chooses to write about her encounters with Bely and his friends in an impressionistic way, omitting thereby many significant names and facts.

Such a method of recollecting the past selectively might be explained by the author's desire to highlight the unreliability of memory. Tsvetaeva also conceals some facts that would be seen as being controversial by her contemporaries in 1934. It is not clear whether Tsvetaeva was aware of the anti-Catholic and anti-theosophical waves of arrests that took place in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Her memoir does not allude to them explicitly. Several friends and relatives of Bely were among the victims of this wave of political oppression. The list of victims includes Sergei Solov'ev (he is mentioned briefly in her memoir),¹⁴ Klavdiia Vasil'eva (Bely's wife)¹⁵ and Tsvetaeva's sister Anastasiia who was arrested in 1933 for 64 days because of her links with Russian theosophers.¹⁶ Whatever the reasons for Tsvetaeva's sketchy representation of the literary and philosophical debates of the 1910s related to Bely and his circle, it is odd to see that her approach to rendering the past excludes several important names. She fails to mention Russian theosopher and psychoanalyst Emilii

¹³ Stock, Ute, *The Ethics of the Poet: Marina Tsvetaeva's Art in the Light of Conscience*, Leeds: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005, p. 14.

¹⁴ On Bely's friendship with Sergei Solov'ev see: Ljunggren, Magnus, 'Andrey Bely and the Philosopher's Nephew', *Poetry and Psychiatry: Essays on Early Twentieth-Century Russian Symbolist Culture*, translated by Charle Rouble, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014, p. 16.

¹⁵ Shentalinskii, Vitalii, 'Oskolki serebriannogo veka. Okonchanie', *Novyi mir*, 1998/6, http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/1998/6/shent.html (accessed 28 May 2017)

¹⁶ Aidinian, Stanislav, *Khronologicheskii obzor zhizni i tvorchestva Anastasii Tsvetaevoi*, Moscow: Akpress, 2010, p. 78.

Medtner, who had close links with Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and who became a Nazi supporter in the 1930s.¹⁷ In 1931 Medtner delivered a lecture at the Psychology Club in Zurich in which he described Russia in Jungian terms with a focus on the ongoing division in Russia between the East and the West. He thought that the division reached the stage of a national neurosis.¹⁸ Similarly, Tsvetaeva portrays Bely's behaviour and artistic persona in terms of personality polarities and neurotic tendencies. In *Plennyi dukh*, she downplays the influence of the publishing house Musaget on her outlook and pays lip service to the fact that Medtner's publishing enterprise was financed by his German friends. The main purpose of it was to promote German culture and philosophy in Russia.

In the 1910s Medtner and his associates in Moscow cherished 'dreams of Russia's future leadership, based on the reception, continuation and advancement of the loftiest elements of the German cultural past, taming the Tiutchevian "chaos" of the Russian soul'.¹⁹ By spending more time on her description of Bely in Berlin, Tsvetaeva makes the reader aware of Bely's love-hate relationship with German culture, suggesting thereby that the participants of Musaget's gatherings would have been horrified by the growing gap between German modernity and German classical culture, exemplified by Goethe, Bach and Beethoven. They thought that culture was not defined by sociological and political circumstances, but exclusively by single geniuses.²⁰ Understandably, due to the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933, Tsvetaeva would have liked to avoid mentioning the views of Medtner, who wanted to reshape Russian modernism in accordance with an eclectic model of his own making.

¹⁷ Ljunggren, Magnus, 'Emilii Medtner and Carl Jung', *Poetry and Psychiatry*, p. 132.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Flamm, Christoph, 'Emilij Metner as Music Critic: Preliminary Remarks', *Russian Literature*, 77.4/2015, 628.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 625.

His model mixed the ideas of Kant and Goethe in an eccentric manner. He hoped in 1909 that Germany would help to heal Russia after the 1905 revolution.²¹ His 1912 collection of articles *Modernism i muzyka (Modernism and Music)*²² contained many of the racist overtones shaped by Houston Stewart Chamberlain's view of European culture as an ongoing battle between subversive Semitic influences and German-Aryan traditions. In October 1912 Medtner was treated by Sigmund Freud for his anxiety attacks. Subsequently he befriended Carl Jung whom he called his ideal *alter ego*. This view was expressed in the 1935 collection of articles dedicated to Jung's birthday. He died in a mental clinic in Dresden in 1936 as 'a dedicated Nazi'.²³ Tsvetaeva chooses to ignore the fact that Medtner's involvement with Bely and Jung enabled the cross-fertilisation of psychoanalytic and Symbolist ideas both in Germany and in Russia. 'Bely and Jung's messages to the world,' affirms Magnus Ljunggren, 'had much in common: if it is not bridged, the split in contemporary humanity – the gap between conscious and unconscious, between the self and others, between intellect and emotion – threatens culture with destruction'.²⁴ Despite the failure to mention Medtner and the Musaget's group's interest in psychoanalysis and in the subconsciousness in literature, Tsvetaeva's memoir questions the ethical aspects of contemporary art and implicitly suggests that artistic communities should find the means to overcome the destructive and irrational forces of history and overcome divisions.

Likewise, it is not coincidental that in 1933 Anastasiia Tsvetaeva translated from English into Russian Thomas Carlyle's book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the*

²¹ Ljunggren, 'Emilii Medtner and Carl Gustav Jung', p. 124.

²² Medtner, Emilii Karlovich, *Modernism i muzyka: Stat'i kriticheskie i polemicheskie (1907-1910)*, Moscow: Musaget, 1912.

²³ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 133.

Heroic in History because she considered Carlyle's ideas to be highly relevant to the understanding of different projects of modernity emerging in Europe in the early 1930s that relied on mass culture and promoted conformism. Being dissatisfied with the language of the 1898 translation of the book into Russian by V.I. Iakovenko, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva wanted to bring Carlyle's essay to the attention of the modern reader. According to her book of memoirs *Neischerpaemoe (Inexhaustible)*, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva discussed her translations of Thomas Carlyle in her letters to Marina Tsvetaeva.²⁵ Like her sister, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva was influenced by the members of the Musaget publishing house, including Ellis and Maximilian Voloshin. Her understanding of Carlyle's idea that some poets should be treated as heroes in the same way as military or political leaders would have been influenced by the Symbolist concept of the interrelationship between art and life as well as by Russian neo-Kantian thinkers interested in intuitive and creative cognition of reality.

Although Marina Tsvetaeva fails in *Plennyi dukh* to mention Ellis's 1910 book *Russkie simvolisty (The Russian Symbolists)* in which Bely was portrayed as a visionary and as a spiritual leader of the new Symbolist group resembling religious brotherhood that promoted the cult of the Eternal Feminine and the Madonna,²⁶ she depicts Bely as a cultural hero in his own right. According to Karin Grell, Ellis's book was inspired by the group discussions pivoting around the relationship between life and art

²⁵ Tsvetaeva, Anastasiia, 'Tomas Karleil' v moei zhizni (kak ia perevodila Kerleila)', *Neischerpaemoe*, Moscow: Otechestvo, 1992, pp. 211-212.

²⁶ According to Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, the Musaget discussions, courses and workshops on Symbolism, theosophy and philosophy were mostly lead by Bely and Kobylinskii (Ellis) who influenced many subsequent publications and activities. Although Medtner was critical of Rudolf Steiner, some members of the group of writers related to his publishing house befriended Steiner in 1910 and became members of the Vladimir Solov'ev Antroposophical Society founded in Moscow in 1913. See: Von Maydel, Renata. 'Anthroposophy in Russia', in: Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Chapel Hill, NC: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 157-158.

and the future of Symbolism, in which Tsvetaeva also took part.²⁷ Her memoir gives the impression that women were not active participants of the discussions, concealing the fact that Russian theosopher and translator Anna Mintslova (1865-1910) was a highly influential figure among Bely and his friends. Mintslova's name is absent from the memoir. Tsvetaeva presents herself and her friend Asia Turgeneva (who was married to Bely briefly) as being observers during the Musaget workshops rather than active participants in group discussions. Yet her involvement with the Musaget group of poets, writers and thinkers informed her aesthetic and philosophical views considerably, including her desire to present Alexander Blok as a new martyr and visionary in her 1916 cycle of poetry which was dedicated to him.

It is worth mentioning here that Bely himself considered fellow poets as worthy of worship as new visionaries. Bely's cycle of poems dedicated to Valery Briusov, for example, presents the older poet both as a heroic and a demonic figure, who is always 'engaged in making poetry, bent over his book, [...] for whom everything is just a symbol'.²⁸ Tsvetaeva's memoir develops a similar approach. Yet she replaces Bely's mythic landscapes of mountains, sunsets and sunrises, admired both by Briusov and the narrator of Bely's cycle interested in the mystery of redemptive action, with urban experiences of everyday life in Berlin, moulding Bely into a Baudelaire-like figure.

Tsvetaeva's narrative also implicitly challenges Medtner's fascination with music as the highest medium of artistic expression and the innermost centre of Western culture. She portrays Bely as a captive spirit of the Symbolist mindset shaped by the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of his time. She brings Bely closer to her own vision of urban life entwined with imagining of the everyday as an extension of the

²⁷ Grelz, Karin, *Beyond the Noise of Time: Readings of Marina Tsvetaeva's Memories of Childhood*, Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2004, pp. 33-34.

²⁸ Pyman, Avril, *A History of Russian Symbolism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 235.

city symphony comprising sounds and visual spectacles governed by the power of rhythm. Her memoir foregrounds the vitality of urban life and attempts to capture the sense impressions of the city at the moment of their unity in cinematographic manner, displaying an atmosphere of fluidity and disorientation.

The essence of film, as Raymond Williams suggests, is to serve as ‘a medium to the disorienting ephemerality of the modern city’. As the definitive modernist mode, film affects other artistic modes of expression by locating them in ‘the *intermediate* zone of urban experience’. According to Williams, this intermediate space might be seen ‘as a “structure of feeling” that has not yet assumed the relatively formalised shape of aesthetic doctrine or political act’.²⁹ Tsvetaeva’s *Plennyi dukh* depicts vividly how Bely creates a biographical legend out of his life and how his linguistic expression is shaped by the urban consciousness. The new way of seeing life, as Tsvetaeva’s memoir shows, is affected by a cinematic vision that relies on montage. The use of montage in modern filmic and literary narratives highlights the disconnectedness of the image from its context and celebrates its fleeting quality. The title of the memoir serves as a metaphorical allusion to the experienced time in modern contexts. Not only does the memoir depict modernist time passing through arrested moments, but it also shows how the private worlds in motion are relative to one another as if each individual has its own rhythm and inner clock. It is also preoccupied with the question ‘How does one represent intangible yet nevertheless flowing time in images and words?’

Tsvetaeva’s younger contemporary Vladimir Nabokov, whom she befriended in Prague in January 1924,³⁰ created his own image of time as a foldable, patterned

²⁹ Williams, Raymond, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, edited by Tony Pinkney, London: Verso, 1989, p. 11.

³⁰ Boyd, Brian, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 221.

carpet which is meant to serve as an antidote to traditional uniform clock time. In his autobiography *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov said: 'I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another'.³¹ In contrast to the notion of mathematical time that progresses successively and irreversibly from the past into the future, Nabokov's Bergsonian image alludes to reversible time that constitutes simultaneously past and present. For Nabokov, time becomes a personal thing that he can manage and control by folding and unfolding to superimpose distant images imprinted on it like a magic carpet.

Similarly, Tsvetaeva's description of the past talks about the personal flow of time as experienced by her, Bely and her daughter Ariadna, who accompanied Tsvetaeva and Bely to the Berlin zoo and other locations including beer houses in which Alia drank beer while listening to her mother and Bely. Tsvetaeva describes one of the cafés they visited after the zoo as an extension of the zoo: 'The zoo ended up with Alia's routine beer in a long wooden latticework structure that resembled a cage'. She goes on to describe Bely, 'who got sunburned during that day to a kind of tea-kettle, samovar color, from which his clearly-Asiatic eyes shone even more blue, against the background of the clearing that splashed greenery and sunshine through the slats of the cage'.³² As we can see, Tsvetaeva's poet's attentiveness to Bely's appearance creates an insightful association between the world of nature and Bely's interest in primordial forms of life that serve as a source of inspiration. Her verbal portrait is completed with Bely's perspective on the peaceful atmosphere of this summer outing: 'It's

³¹ Nabokov, Vladimir, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1966, p. 139.

³² Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'A Captive Spirit', *A Captive Spirit: Selected Prose*, edited and translated by J. Marin King, London: Virago, 1983, p. 145.

nice, isn't it? How I like all this! The grass, the big animals off over there, you, so simple ... And your daughter, quiet, sensible, not saying anything ... (And now like a refrain:) It's pleasant'.³³ The moment of pleasant contemplation becomes associated in Tsvetaeva's narrative with the slow pace of life opposed to the rhythms of hasty life on the streets of Berlin, and enables the memory to relive the past as a fleeting moment.

It also draws her readers' attention to the attentiveness of Tsvetaeva the narrator of the memoir. It provokes the question: how long would an individual need to look at a work of art or a person as an art object in order to gain a full aesthetic appreciation of it? Tsvetaeva's habit of attentiveness to aesthetically experienced moments of life as well as objects is ironically juxtaposed to her husband's inability to remember things correctly. Upon his arrival from Prague to Berlin he gets the age of his daughter wrong: 'A few days later her father arrived from Prague and was horror-struck at her passion for beer. "Like a bottomless barrel! At eight years old! No, we must put an end to that. Today I'll give her as much beer as she wants – so as to wean her off for good" '.³⁴ Not only does Sergei Efron appear to forget that his daughter is almost ten years old, he also objects to his wife's eccentric parental skills. Yet Tsvetaeva portrays her daughter's own attentiveness to Bely's stories about the past and his friendship with Alexander Blok and other poets as something insightful: after a few mugs of beer, Alia expresses her desire to go off to sleep, so she would not start saying 'the same stupid things as Andrei Bely'.³⁵ Being exposed to the conversations of the two poets of significance, Alia appears to have learnt from them the habit of attentiveness that enabled her to appreciate creativity and develop her own judgement. The

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

³⁵ Ibid.

observation on Alia's ability to be attentive and to think creatively is also illustrated by her description of a lion in the zoo as the spitting image of Lev Tolstoy. The scenes related to the zoo promote a special link between verbal and visual modes of expression as part of a larger project of self-development and self-creation inspired by cinematographic explorations of reality that inform the development of a modern identity.

Tsvetaeva's memoir also validates Boris Tomashevskii's thesis that 'the biography that is useful to the literary historian is not the author's curriculum vitae or the investigator's account of his life' but 'the biographical legend created by the author himself'. In Tomashevskii's view, 'only such a legend is a *literary fact*'.³⁶ It is important to note here that Tomashevskii's notion of biographical legend as the literary conception of the poet's life serves as a useful background for the poet's literary works, as described in his 1923 article 'Literatura i biografiia' ('Literature and Biography'). Tomashevskii's article suggests that the poet's self-fashioning intimate confessions and allusions appeared only 'in hidden, mystically masked forms of Symbolism'.³⁷ By contrast, he discusses the poets of the post-Symbolist mould, including Vladimir Mayakovsky, as writers who show readers their own biography through works that resemble 'an open diary in which intimate feelings are recorded'.³⁸ Bearing in mind Viktoriia Shveitzer's observation that Bely, in *Plennyi dukh*, lives in Tsvetaeva's reminiscences as a human being,³⁹ we can see that Bely's experience of time interrelated with his creative process inspired Tsvetaeva to appreciate modern poetic rhythms as manifestations of urban experiences. Tsvetaeva, like D.S. Mirsky before

³⁶ Tomashevsky, Boris, 'Literature and Biography', in: Matejka, Ladislav and Pomorska, Krystyna (eds), *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971, p. 55.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁹ Schweitzer, Viktoria, *Tsvetaeva*, translated from the Russian by Robert Chandler and H.T. Willets, New York: Noonday Press, 1992, p. 179.

her,⁴⁰ presents Bely as the progenitor of Russian Futurist poetry by describing his ability to talk about his life as part of his creative process and to be attentive to the visual and aural aspects of the flow of time.

Tsvetaeva's narrator self-fashions herself as a writer who understands the difference between documentary biographies that belong to studies concerned with cultural history, 'on a par with the biographies of general and inventors',⁴¹ and literary memoirs in which 'the juxtaposition of the texts and the author's biography plays a structural role'.⁴² Given that Tsvetaeva's memoir concludes with the reproduction of Bely's poem dedicated to Tsvetaeva that praises the power of her poetic rhythmical structures, it confirms the continuity of Bely's vision. The method of rendering multiple viewpoints and moments of urban life shaped by the experience of space-time in constant motion is celebrated in *Plennyi dukh* as a new form of artistic expression. Early Symbolist literature, concedes Tomashevskii, created a new intimate style oriented towards the reproduction in literary works of 'intimate conversations and confidential confessions'. This style was succeeded by biographical lyricism. For the Symbolist poet, Tomashevskii concludes, 'his biography was a living and necessary commentary to his works. His poems are lyrical episodes about himself, and his readers always informed themselves [...] about the principal events of his life'.⁴³ In Tsvetaeva's memoir, biographical lyricism is inseparable from an aestheticist exploration of patterns, shapes, movements

⁴⁰ Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature*, ed. Francis W. Whitfield, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, p. 463

⁴¹ Tomashevsky, 'Literature and Biography', p. 55.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 54.

and rhythms that differs strikingly from the descriptions of metropolitan modernity produced by contemporary journalists, sociologists and architects.

Tsvetaeva's rendering of Bely's stream of consciousness reinforces Tomashevskii's conception of biographical lyricism as an important element of post-Symbolist culture. The narrator of *Plennyi dukh* makes her readers aware that, being informed by the space-time experiences of metropolitan modernity, Bely's oral and written forms of self-expression are superior to the realist idea of art found in the Russian nineteenth-century novel. Her memoir demonstrates how Bely's artistic language transcends the ossifying power of everyday language and scientific terminology, so that the rapid change of modern reality becomes registered in its rhythm, pauses and disjointed narratives.

According to a letter from Bely to Fedor Gladkov written shortly before the former's death in 1934, Bely suffered from a condition that he defined as tongue-tie (*kosnoiazychie*). The letter includes Bely's confession about inadequacy of his artistic expression: 'The word is always buried inside me with difficulty; since childhood I was terrified by the emptiness of everyday words; and this is why up to the age of 16 all words were taken away from me; I aspired to big words but they did not exist, even to this day'.⁴⁴ Tsvetaeva's *Plennyi dukh* is sympathetic to Bely's desire to find an adequate expression for the modern perception of the universe affected by radical developments in science in the 1880s-1920s and by contemporary discussions of the cultural crisis.

The story presents Bely's disjointed monologues not as a speech impediment but an ability to speak in tongues in the style of prophets and holy fools. This quality of Bely's word-weaving was defined in Yurii Lotman's article on Bely as a search

⁴⁴ Quoted in English in Cooke, Olga, ' "Kosnojazyčie" in the Final Decade of Andrej Belyj's Artistic Life', *Russian Literature*, 53/2005, 47-48.

‘for a different language’ and a quest for new forms of expression due to Bely’s realisation that semantic meaning can be carried not just by words, but also by sounds, intonation and non-verbal forms of expression. Lotman thought that Bely’s formal linguistic experiments of the late period outgrew the Symbolist aesthetic and ‘became close to Khlebnikov’s dadaism’.⁴⁵ As Olga Cooke has noted, some critics went so far as to define Bely in the 1920s as ‘a cosmic Suprematist’ because nothing was static in his artistic world. Cooke suggests that ‘the principle of spontaneity dominated’ during the composition of Bely’s late works to the effect that the spirit of creation was articulated too, as if the author wanted to free himself from the tyranny of temporal and spatial categories.⁴⁶

Tsvetaeva’s definition of Bely as a captive spirit reflects the fluidity of Bely’s gestalt and links his search for a new mode of artistic expression to contemporary theoretical models foregrounding a new perception of space. It is worth noting here that Tsvetaeva’s memoir depicts different stages of his career. According to Anna Saakiant, Tsvetaeva’s participation in the seminars on poetry organised by the Russian publisher Musaget and Bely might have influenced her own experiments with rhythmic structures in poetry despite the fact that she would remember Bely largely as a talented eccentric rather than her teacher.⁴⁷

What interests Tsvetaeva in Bely is his Bergsonian approach to modern art which dispenses with the surface gestalt and reveals the automatic creation of the attentive mind, thereby looking for deeper insight beyond the limits of human rationality. Bergson talks about his model of metaphysical intuition (a gestalt free vision) thus:

⁴⁵ Lotman, Yu., ‘Poeticheskoe kosnoiazychie Belogo’, in: Lesnevskii, S. and Mikhailov, A. (eds), *Andrei Belyi: Problemy tvorchestva: Stat'i, vospominaniia, publikatsii*, Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988, p. 439.

⁴⁶ Cooke, ‘“Kosnojazyčie”’, p. 55.

⁴⁷ Saakiant, Anna, ‘Vstrecha poetov: Andrei Belyi i Marina Tsvetaeva’, in: Mikhailov and Lesnevskii, *Andrei Belyi*, pp. 367-368.

‘When I direct my attention inward to contemplate my own self, I perceive at first [...] all the perceptions which come to it from the material world. These perceptions are clear, distinct, juxtaposed or juxtaposable with one another; they tend to group themselves into objects [...]. But if I draw myself in from the periphery towards the centre, [...] I find an altogether different thing. There beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface, a continuous flux which is not comparable to any flux I have ever seen. There is a succession of states each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it. In reality no one begins or ends, but all extend into each other’.⁴⁸ Bergson’s description of gestalt-free perception implies that the artistic technique of superimposition, as it is used in modern painting, could enable individuals to suppress rational ideas and attain first-hand experience of reality. Creative thinking is presented in Bergson’s book on metaphysics as a state of fluid vision comparable to intuitive cognition of reality. The modern ‘automatic’ artist embodies Bergson’s ideas about the necessity of remaining static in the state of gestalt-free perception by suppressing definitive formative ideas. ‘The traditional artist too knows the state of fluid and gestalt free vision,’ affirms Anton Ehrenzweig, ‘but he forgets them as soon as definitive formative ideas emerge’.⁴⁹

Tsvetaeva’s story attempts to render the gestalt-free perception of reality. It highlights the difference between traditional and modern art as well as between conscious and automatic forms of artistic expression. It demonstrates that the gestalt-free ‘ear-wandering’ type of writing that Bely tried to achieve in his late period produces the effect of polyphony. Arguably, Tsvetaeva’s own evolution from lyricism to polyphony appears to have been partly shaped by her encounters with Bely as well as by

⁴⁸ Bergson, Henri, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, London: Macmillan, 1913, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Ehrenzweig, Anton, *The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p. 36.

her exposure to the works of European Dadaists, Surrealists, and Soviet and French filmmakers. As one of her 1939 letters to Sergei Efron (sent from Paris to Moscow) testifies, Tsvetaeva was especially fond of French cinema and she considered it to be the best in the world. She particularly praised the human touch as one of the most important features of French cinema.⁵⁰ She was also aware of Eisenstein's films and theoretical works and essays on film produced by Russian Formalists. Being an enthusiastic reader of Sergei Efron's articles on Soviet filmmakers, Efron's sister Lilia Efron sent from Russia a collection of essays on film written by Russian Formalists to her brother and Tsvetaeva in February 1931.⁵¹

Given Tsvetaeva's interest in aesthetic experiences as a tool for cognising reality, it is worth comparing some of the aforementioned verbal 'snapshots' of her meetings with Bely with the two obituaries of Bely written in January and July 1934. The July obituary was written by the established Russian émigré critic and editor Gleb Struve. Struve's essay mentions Bely's links with Russian Symbolists and Rudolf Steiner. In Struve's opinion, Bely and Blok were representatives of the religious-philosophical current of Russian Symbolism that developed many tenets of Vladimir Solov'ev's mystical philosophy. While finding Bely's novel *Petersburg* uneven, Struve praises Bely's autobiographical novel *Kotik Letaev* (1915-1922) for its utilisation of 'new methods for rendering subconscious emotions and impressions'. Struve defines these methods as Bely's 'most daring experiment in the style of Joyce's technique'.⁵² Arguably, Struve's obituary links Bely's experiments with European modernism. Struve also states that Bely is well known in Germany through the suc-

⁵⁰ Tsvetaeva, Marina, *Neizdannoe. Sem'ia: Istoriia v pis'makh*, edited by E.B. Korkina, Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1999, pp. 380, 384.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

⁵² Struve, Gleb, 'Andrey Bely (Boris Bugaev)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 13.37/1934, 184.

cessful translations of his works into German, and laments the absence of English translations of his works. He comments that 'a genius and a fool coexisted in Bely's soul' to the extent that nearly all Bely's creative output 'is marked by that double personality'.⁵³ Struve's observation stands close to Tsvetaeva's portrayal of Bely as a genius and a holy fool. By juxtaposing Struve's and Tsvetaeva's characterisations of Bely, we can see that at the centre of Tsvetaeva's story is her interest in Bely's creative method rather than in his achievements as a writer. Her memoir attempts to portray Bely's private world as a world in motion and as an embodiment of modern urban consciousness.

The second obituary – which appeared in the prestigious émigré newspaper *Vozrozhdenie* (*Renaissance*) on 13 January 1934 – was written by Vladislav Khodasevich, who signed it as V.K. 'It was a person who was not just talented and gifted: he was a genius. [...]', asserts Khodasevich. 'Being always torn between different things, always highly impressionable, Andrey Bely did not realise all the potential with which he was endowed so generously. Perhaps, his restless mental life which always cascaded so many gushes of energy out of his physical body was the main reason for this. Nevertheless, Bely's literary output is enormous'.⁵⁴ Like Tsvetaeva, Khodasevich suggests that Bely was a true Symbolist in everything he did. He goes as far as to claim that only Alexander Blok, Bely and Viacheslav Ivanov could be considered as true representatives of Russian Symbolism, as opposed to the older generation of Symbolists who could be defined as decadents. Khodasevich also talks about the impact of Bely's works and activities on all Russian literary life after 1905. 'Perhaps, just as important as his books,' affirms Khodasevich, 'his highly complex personality – which at times was incompatible with existing conventions of everyday life

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ V.Kh. 'Andrei Belyi', *Vozrozhdenie*, 9.3147/13 January 1934, 2.

– had a tremendous influence on people due to his unique and unforgettable charisma'.⁵⁵ Khodasevich thought that, despite all Bely's works and activities containing a trace of hastiness and nervous breakdown, his philosophical and critical writings created a compelling argument that Russian Symbolism should be seen not as a literary movement but as an embodiment of a certain worldview. Tsvetaeva's statement (inserted into her memoir) 'Symbolism was much more than a literary movement'⁵⁶ echoes Khodasevich's pronouncement about Symbolism's ability to endow its adherents with a certain worldview.

Khodasevich emphasises that Bely's death brings a huge sense of sadness to everyone who was fortunate to know him. He predicts that Bely's death will create a void in Russian literature which cannot be filled by anyone else. In contrast to Khodasevich, Tsvetaeva's insertion of Bely's poem praising her invincible rhythms and the vitality of her melodies implies that the void left by Bely could be filled by Tsvetaeva's own verse and fiction.

The narrator of *Plennyi dukh* self-fashions herself as a person who possesses important techniques inspired by Bely's experiments with verbal and visual structures. She relies on overtonal montage to release images from two dimensions because a new kind of cinematographic narration requires a new perception of space. By blurring the boundaries between visual image and word, between reader and text, as well as between spectator and performer, Tsvetaeva redefines the notion of the captive spirit by creating a literary equivalent of the filmic fourth dimension found in Sergei Eisenstein's films.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'Plennyi dukh', *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1984, vol. 2, p. 276.

TSVETAeva's RENDERING OF BELY'S WORLDVIEW

Tsvetaeva creates her own bond with Bely by portraying him as an exile who experiences displacement both inside and outside Russia. In her rendering of Bely's life, his restless spirit becomes synonymous with the fleeting quality of urban experiences and liminality associated with the prevalent sense of homelessness among many Russians and Europeans affected by the World War I. Hamid Naficy's definition of exile as a 'process of perpetual becoming, involving separation from home, a period of liminality and in-betweenness that can be temporary or permanent, and incorporation into dominant and host society that can be partial or incomplete'⁵⁷ can be successfully applied to Tsvetaeva's works of the 1920s-1930s.

The notion of liminality that Naficy borrowed from the famous American anthropologist Victor Turner is usually related to anthropological studies of various rites of passage in primitive societies. According to Turner, liminality might be partly characterised as the stage of reflection. 'During the liminal period,' writes Turner, 'neophytes are encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them'.⁵⁸ Neophytes are also presented with *sacra* and are told that 'they are being filled with mystical power' which would enable them to attain successfully a new status or to undertake new tasks 'in this world, or the next'.⁵⁹ As Turner puts it, 'the communication of *sacra* [...] teaches the neophytes how to think about some degree of abstraction about their cultural milieu'.⁶⁰ Turner describes the knowledge attained during the liminal state portrayed through the Eleusinian Mys-

⁵⁷ Naficy, Hamid, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Turner, Victor, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage', in Mahdi, Louise Carus, Foster, Steven and Little, Meredith (eds), *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1994, p. 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

teries practised in Ancient Greece as the foremost principles of life. Likewise, Tsvetaeva describes her encounters with Bely in 1922 as a symbolic rite of passage into émigré life that enlightened her on the positive aspects of in-between existence: they enabled Tsvetaeva to shape her sense of selfhood in the European cultural context of the 1920s.

The application of Turner's notion of liminal space to the description of the exilic condition makes problematic the definition by Elisabeth Bronfen of life in exile as a 'simultaneous and imperfect presence in two worlds'.⁶¹ I would argue that Tsvetaeva's memoir reinforces the belief in the importance of mystical rituals and symbolic thinking for the spiritual transcendence of the everyday. Thus her last meeting with Bely in a suburb of Berlin is portrayed as a night of allegorical seclusion in which the narrator participates in a symbolic mystical marriage as Bely's 'ritual wife'. Berlin is ascribed in Tsvetaeva's story with the qualities of a liminal space used for the exploration of thresholds between the sensory and performative, the visual and verbal, the literal and metaphorical. Her portrayal of Bely as a captive spirit is comparable to Michael Seidel's definition of the exile as 'someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another'.⁶²

Although Tsvetaeva's story highlights the significance of the Moscow environment for her creativity and identity, the references to Moscow, Berlin and Prague embedded in her story are portrayed through the prism of a mythopoeic vision of the exilic condition that presupposes the trope of the writer as a displaced person, the Romantic association of exile with the fall from grace, and a psychoanalytic view of

⁶¹ Bronfen, Elisabeth, 'Entortung und Identität: Ein Thema der modernen Exilliteratur', *Germanic Review*, 69/1994, 71.

⁶² Seidel, Michael, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986, p. ix.

exile in terms of the Oedipal separation from the mother.⁶³ The loss of home as a category of identification affects both Bely and Tsvetaeva, and subsequently they respond to the estrangement from their home and their past identities with a striking insistence on the power of poetic imagination. Tsvetaeva's imagined space of exile – as depicted in *Plennyi dukh* – is assembled from her fragmented memories of the past and omits any references to her life in Moscow in the early Soviet period.

In *Plennyi dukh*, the discussion of Tsvetaeva's life in emigration pivots around the creation of a third space constructed out of her desire to challenge a normative gendered space of the feminine. The description of Bely's photographs in Tsvetaeva's story reinforces the state of liminality of the female narrator who explores her memoir writing as part of a performative space that relies on the automatic creation of the depth mind. The liminal space, as Josette Feral notes, invokes the concept of journey, rather than destination. According to Feral, the performative space is transitional: it represents undefined zones and reoccupied spaces 'inhabited by individuals' because 'it is a space of passage and crossing rather than a place of identification'.⁶⁴ By presenting the Berlin of *Plennyi dukh* as a space of exile and as a space of transition, Tsvetaeva highlights the fluidity of her poetic identity associated with the automatic creation of the depth mind. While Moscow is lamented in the story as a place of permanence (it is linked, to a large extent, to the identity of the fathers of both Tsvetaeva and Bely, and to the creative developments of the pre-revolutionary period), Berlin is portrayed as a space of transit, and Prague is mentioned as a place that could have been an ideal home for Bely. The story notes the existence of Czech grants offered to

⁶³ Bronfen, 'Entortung und Identität', p. 68.

⁶⁴ Feral, Josette, 'Every Transaction Conjures a New Boundary', in: Reinelt, Janelle and Roach, Joseph (eds), *Critical Theory and Performance*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007, p. 59.

Russian writers and how, in addition to Tsvetaeva, Professor Kondakov and his associates would have served as a perfect community of like-minded people for Bely.

The counterfactual approach to history used in the concluding part of the story indicates Tsvetaeva's disappointment with Bely's decision to go back to Russia, where he had to assume the role of an internal émigré. She recalls how in November 1923 Bely asked her to find a room for him in Prague or near Prague, so they could continue their conversations. Tsvetaeva provides a few quotes from Bely's four-page letter to her that she describes as a hysterical emotional outburst: 'it was a 4-page outburst of emotions expressed on four pages'; 'the four pages contained his sobs and howling, mixed with childishly useless instructions and descriptions of a room he needed'.⁶⁵ Tsvetaeva admits that she assured Bely that he was more precious to her than anyone else and the most dearest friend of hers ('dorozhe dorogogo i rodnee rod-nogo'), but she never received a reply from him. As Tsvetaeva reports in her memoir, a few days later after sending her letter to Bely she learnt from the newspaper *Rul'* (*The Rudder*) about Bely's departure. The newspaper commented briefly that Bely left Berlin for Soviet Russia during November 1923 for good. She speculates that Bely left for Russia the same day that he sent her his emotional letter in which he asked for Tsvetaeva's help with accommodation in Prague. Tsvetaeva suggests in another paragraph that perhaps Bely did not appreciate her enough. She also describes one visitor from Berlin who came to Prague in 1924: he told her that Bely talked strangely about Tsvetaeva. Allegedly, Bely told that friend of Tsvetaeva an odd thing: 'Of course, I like Tsvetaeva, how could I not like Tsvetaeva when she *too* is a professor's daughter'.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'Plennyi dukh', p. 285. (All translations from this story are mine unless specified otherwise.)

⁶⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, *Captive Spirit*, p. 156.

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Tsvetaeva's confessional mode in the concluding part of the memoir suggests that she did not feel guilty about Bely's hasty departure for Russia. Her feelings are conveyed in a dispassionate manner as a documentary-style account of events. This contrasts with Bely's aforementioned emotional letter sent to Tsvetaeva from Berlin to Prague. She writes: 'What didn't I write! I wrote *everything*! The room waited, the Czech scholarship waited. And the Czechs waited. And the friends condemned to slavery waited. And I – waited'.⁶⁷

In contrast to Tsvetaeva's portrayal of Bely as a highly unstable individual, driven by his inspiration and his intuitive search for a new artistic language, Mark Aldanov, the well-known Russian émigré fiction writer, sees Bely in his letter of 26 June 1922 as a rational person preoccupied with psychoanalytic modes of writing:

I had a supper with Bely recently in one of the restaurants in Berlin. (I saw him before that at Gessen's place.) He is a very educated and even highly knowledgeable person who belongs to an exhilarating breed of people. When he talked enthusiastically in the restaurant, he was a spectacle, everyone was looking at him. I had a strange but favourable impression of him. When we discussed private matters and political issues, he criticised mercilessly the Bolsheviks and the Smenovekhovtsy. Yet when I read his essays afterwards [...], I was surprised to see his strange use of syntax: in each sentence he places the subject (noun or pronoun) in such a manner that it makes no sense at all. What can it be? He is a famous author, I must say. The German newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt* compares Bely to Dostoevsky... He is our best modernist writer in all respects.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

⁶⁸ Grin, M. E. (ed.), 'Pis'ma M.A. Aldanova k I.A. i V.N. Buninym', *Novyi zhurnal*, 80.1/1965, 262-263.

As can be seen from Aldanov's account of his meetings with Bely, Bely's word-weaving did not affect his conversational style, but it manifested itself in Bely's written language. Aldanov also comments on Bely's sound judgement in political matters. Aldanov's preference for a realist aesthetic provides a useful insight to Bely's feeling of loneliness among Russian émigré writers in 1922.

Unlike Aldanov, Tsvetaeva portrays Bely as a Surrealist-like writer interested in automatic writing as well as in decoding the gestalt-free perception of reality. By 1934 Tsvetaeva successfully developed herself as an émigré author who found her own voice through her memoir writing using the cross-cutting narrative style akin to Eisenstein's theory of the overtone montage. Its function, as manifested in such films as *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925), is to push the perceptual boundaries of the audience. Anne Nesbet suggests that the idea of attaining high reality through the use of overtone montage in Eisenstein's films derives from Petr Ouspensky's notion of the fourth spatial dimension developed in 1909.⁶⁹ Caroline Maclean thinks that the notion of the overtone montage stems both from Ouspensky's idea of the fourth dimension and from Hermann Minkowski's 1908 article 'Space and Time' in which he argues that space and time are 'two parts of a unified whole'.⁷⁰

The validity of the comparison between Eisenstein's and Bely's experiments with language might be explained by how Eisenstein, a member of the Rosicrucian order, developed a strong interest in the occult and in the ideas of Blavatskaya and Rudolph Steiner.⁷¹ In August 1920 he attended a lecture on Bergson's theory of

⁶⁹ Nesbet, Anne, *Savage Junctions: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 223.

⁷⁰ Maclean, Caroline, 'That Magic Force that is Montage: Eisenstein's Filmic Fourth Dimension, Borderline and H.D.', *Literature and History*, 21.1/2012, 45.

⁷¹ Lövgren, Hakan, 'Sergei Eisenstein's Gnostic Circle', in: Rosenthal, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 1997, p. 276.

laughter delivered by Boris Zubakin (1894-1938), the famous Russian theosopher, sculptor and poet; after the lecture, Eisenstein talked to Zubakin and joined his order of Rosicrucian knights. He described the ritual of conversion thus: 'Some words. And we, linking hands, walked past a mirror. The mirror sent our union... into the astral'.⁷² Later on Eisenstein developed his theory of montage that comprised scientific and mystical notions. He identified different types of montage with various vibrations: while metric montage was associated with physical vibrations, tonal montage was supposed to trigger emotional vibrations, and the overtonal or fourth-dimensional montage usually caused 'the kinds of vibrations that once again ceased to be perceived as tones but are perceived rather as purely physical "parallaxes" on the part of the perceiver'.⁷³ As Maclean notes, 'parallaxes occur when an observer shifts position and an object appears to have moved'.⁷⁴ Slavoi Žižek suggests that, through parallax, subject and object are inherently mediated: 'The subject's gaze is always already inscribed into the perceived object itself'.⁷⁵ According to Žižek, the subject understands that the picture is in his/her eye, but he/she also sees himself/herself in the picture. Parallax is usually defined as the displacement of the object caused by a change in observational position.

Tsvetaeva uses Eisensteinian fourth-dimensional parallax at the end of her story when she describes one of the photographs of Bely published in an émigré newspaper as 'an astral picture' (*astral'nyi snimok*) and defines Bely's face as 'the face of a spirit with eyes through which shines that otherworldly light (*tem svetom*)'. She suggests that the light emanating from Bely's photograph affects the viewer: 'The light

⁷² Quoted in Lövgren, 'Sergei Eisenstein's Gnostic Circle', p. 277.

⁷³ Quoted in Maclean, 'That Magic Force that is Montage', p. 54.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Žižek, Slavoi, *The Parallax View*, Boston: MIT Press, 2006, p. 17.

shines through – on us (*na nas skvožit*)'.⁷⁶ She describes the displacement caused by the photograph in the manner of Eisenstein's four-dimensional montage, so the readers of her story could visualise it themselves and experience the binding effect of the photograph as well as feel the vibrations resembling irregular movements triggered by the breeze. The narrator of Tsvetaeva's memoir functions as an Eisenstein-like figure who uses scientific and mystical knowledge in order to control the impact of her image of Bely on the reader. Bely's tongue-tie mode of speaking is presented in the story not only as an exilic condition but also as a quality of the true modern poet who aspires to push the boundaries of perception through rendering the fourth dimension's presence in the real world. With the use of the parallax, Tsvetaeva binds the reader to the image of Bely in the photograph. She describes her own presence in that image in such a way that the definition of the captive spirit applied to Bely becomes applicable to Tsvetaeva herself.

It is clear that Tsvetaeva's memoir about Bely reveals her strong interest in overtonal/fourth-dimensional montage. She was familiar with Soviet and French films of the 1920s-1930s, and in the late 1920s Tsvetaeva became interested in photography. Her friendship with Nikolai Gronskii, a passionate photographer and poet, enabled her to understand many technical aspects of photography. Her friend Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky characterised Soviet films produced in 1925-1931 as 'the most significant development in the whole history of cinematography' and stated that: 'The purely technical importance of the work of Eisenstein and his school for the art of the moving pictures can hardly be exaggerated and is universally recognised, even in Hollywood'.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'Plennyi dukh', pp. 287-288.

⁷⁷ Mirsky, D.S., 'The Soviet Films', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 7.4/1931, 522.

Mirsky's article on Soviet films also praises the highbrow cinematography of Western Europe represented by the French school which 'has been seized on by poets and by directors inspired by the modern poetic outlook, that is to say consciously concerned with the expression of the subconsciousness'.⁷⁸ In Mirsky's opinion, the best films produced by the French school are comparable to the high standards of modern poetry. He praises Eisenstein's 1925 film *Bronenosets Potemkin* for being the true embodiment 'of the inherent kinship of the art of cinematography with science'.⁷⁹ Mirsky describes the invention of montage as a significant development that introduced 'a new scientific attitude into the very process of creation'.⁸⁰ His definition of montage as 'a creative practice of "cutting" individual shots and putting them together in an order aiming at a maximum effectiveness'⁸¹ is a fitting description of the principle of montage used in Tsvetaeva's story about Bely, in which she attempts to render Bely's unconsciousness and to stimulate different sensory reactions of the reader with the help of rhythmic and overtone montage. Mirsky believed that both American behaviourism and the reflexology of Bekhterev and Pavlov had already influenced the new cinematography and could enable it to develop further.⁸² Tsvetaeva's *Plennyi dukh* suggests that Tsvetaeva was aware of many important aesthetic developments in Russia and in Europe in the early 1930s. That is why she portrays Bely as a precursor of the new language of modern poetry who was torn between the rational and irrational aspects of modern culture. She also appears to be suspicious of Bely's interest in theosophy. This is felt in her self-representation as someone repeating enthusiastically

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 526.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 527.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 528.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p. 532.

after Father Sergii the prayer: ‘Grant peace, O Lord, to the soul of the servant newly come to Thee – Boris’.⁸³

The story ends with the report of Tsvetaeva’s husband bringing home Bely’s collection of poetry *Posle razluki* (*After Separation*), which contains a poem dedicated to Tsvetaeva. Bely’s poem praises Tsvetaeva’s poetic prayers: ‘Vashi molitvy– / Malinovye melodii / I– / Nepobedimye / Ritmy’ (‘melodies of crimsons and invincible rhythms’).⁸⁴ The concluding part of the story featuring Bely’s poem celebrates the vitality of poetic imagination. It also functions as superimposition, suggesting thereby that Bely is a beholder of Tsvetaeva’s gaze, too. Like the Dadaists, Tsvetaeva was suspicious of the Futurists’ fascination with the militant, industrial machine culture and of their celebration of the rapid rhythm of modern life as a tool that should make new art more material, direct and more simplified. More appealing to her was the Dadaists’ exploration of modern noises and rhythms, and abstract symmetries instead of principles as part of the subversion of existing cultural conventions from within. Dadaists wrote: ‘Rhythm is the trotting of intonations you can hear; there is a rhythm which you cannot see or hear, light-rays from an inner cluster towards a constellation of order’.⁸⁵ The allusion to light rays associated with psychic experiences of reality is comparable to Tsvetaeva’s aforementioned photograph of Bely permeated with a special light that makes it look like an astral picture.

It appears that Tsvetaeva’s insistence on the cinematographic qualities of Bely’s writing was shaped by her own exposure to Russian and French films. Tsvetaeva’s description of Bely in Berlin found in her letter to Aleksandr Bakhrakh on 20 Ju-

⁸³ Tsvetaeva, ‘Plennyi dukh’, p. 313; *A Captive Spirit*, p. 158

⁸⁴ Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, p. 159.

⁸⁵ Tzara, Tristan, ‘Note sur la poésie’ (1919), quoted in English in David Gascoigne, ‘Boomboom and Hullabaloo: Rhythm in the Zurich Dada Revolution’, *Paragraph*, 33.2/2010, 202.

ly 1923 differs strikingly from her memoir. It says: 'I love Boris Nikolaevich tenderly [...]. He is a lonely person. In everyday life he is less capable than me; he acts like a madman. When I am around him, I feel that he acts like a blind person and I function as his guide dog. It is healing to relate to somebody else's weakness. My best memories of Berlin are connected with him'.⁸⁶ It is clear that in 1934 she wanted to portray herself as a person inspired by Bely who had mastered the rendering of the unconsciousness and of the fourth-dimensional gestalt-free perception of reality as a spatio-temporal continuum. Tsvetaeva's Post Scriptum at the end of the story has a confessional statement: 'I sometimes think that there are no endings (*kontsa – net*)'.⁸⁷ The statement is double-edged. It can mean both that poetic speech is immortal and that things which are spatially unrepresentable in the three dimensional world can emerge in the fourth dimension. The visual overtone or overall impression from watching moving images might prove to be a real element of a 'four-dimensional space-time continuum', as Eisenstein defined the fourth dimension that shifts between space and time.⁸⁸

Since Tsvetaeva's memoir was written in Paris we can see that Paris, being another centre of cultural innovation from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, is described in the story as a more vibrant city than Berlin of the early 1920s. Paris offers Tsvetaeva a vantage point that enables her to assume a hybrid identity and assemble images from the past in the style of a theatrical performance in order to bring them back to life through her public reading of the memoir to her fellow émigré writers and critics. Tsvetaeva read her memoir during the commemorative evening dedicated to

⁸⁶ Quoted in Saakiantz, Anna, 'Vstrecha poetov', p. 383.

⁸⁷ Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, p. 158.

⁸⁸ Eisenstein, Sergei, 'The Fourth Dimension in the Cinema', *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1988, p. 185. Quoted in Maclean, "That Magic Force That is Montage", pp. 44-60.

Bely on 15 March 1934 in Paris. She was pleased with her ability to embody the living image of Bely constructed out of her impressions of him. She wrote:

My portrait of Bely is successful. [...] He appears to be alive; he is all in motion; he communicates directly with the reader as if he is alive. During my public reading of the memoir, everyone who knew Bely admired my portrayal of him because of its close resemblance to the real Bely. I used Bely's monologue as much as possible. [...] My Bely sounded like the real Bely so strongly that I would not be surprised to see him in the middle of the room while I was reading out my story. I would not have been frightened by his resurrection.⁸⁹

The physiological sensation created by the reading of the memoir once again invokes the notion of fourth-dimensional space. It suggests a space without boundaries, into which even the body could walk. Tsvetaeva's comment is double-edged: while she highlights the power of performance to embody images and spaces, she also professes a near-religious veneration for the Word shared by many Russian writers. It appears that one of the main goals of Tsvetaeva's 1934 memoir about Bely written for the Russian émigré community in Paris was to remind the Russian reader abroad about Bely's contribution to the development of Russian literature as an experimental space for the cross-fertilisation of Russian and European ideas. Tsvetaeva's focus on Bely's unusual syntactical structures, his style of speaking and his belief in the ability of the language to embody the visible and the invisible might be influenced by Khodasevich's concerns about the conservative nature of the Russian émigré community. These were conveyed in his seminal 1933 essay 'Literatura v izgnanii' ('Litera-

⁸⁹ Tsvetaeva, 'Plennyi dukh', p. 284.

ture in Exile').⁹⁰ By challenging the views of some émigré critics that Russian literature would not survive outside Russia, Khodasevich's article dispells their fears and anxieties. It states: 'The nationality of literature is created by its language and spirit, and not by the territory where its life transpires, not by the everyday (*byt*) it reflects'.⁹¹ Khodasevich promotes a notion of transnational identity and links it to Russian cultural heritage and spiritual values.

Tsvetaeva is keen to remind the Russian émigré reader that the only concept of self that Bely and herself were willing to accept during their meetings in Berlin in 1922 was that of the poet. By creating a subtitle for her story, 'Moia vstrecha s Andreem Belym' ('My meeting with Andrey Bely'), Tsvetaeva emphasises how the importance of her identity as a Russian poet was reinforced by her encounters with Bely. Her memoir notes that their fathers were university professors from Moscow; they had common friends among Russian Symbolist poets, critics and translators; they were both interested in religious sects such as flagellants; they shared an interest in the interrelationship between music and poetry; and their emigration to Berlin heightened their sense of the irrevocable loss of the pre-revolutionary Russian culture to which they belonged. Yet the sense of displacement triggered by the October Revolution provided Tsvetaeva and Bely with an opportunity to broaden their repertoire and to seek a new language of expression suitable for their somatic poetics.

In addition to some biographical affinities between Bely and Tsvetaeva, the memoir constructs an image of the poet-exile whose displacement ensures his renderings of the otherworldly and metaphysical encounters with reality to be conveyed in

⁹⁰ *Literatura v izgnanii*, <http://hodasevich.lit-info.ru/hodasevich/kritika/hodasevich/literatura-v-izgnanii.htm>, (accessed 1 August 2017).

⁹¹ Quoted in English in: Slobin, Greta N., 'Why the First-Wave Russian Literary Diaspora Embraced Shklovskian Estrangement', *Poetics Today*, 26.4/2005, 713.

spatial terms, creating thereby a sense of simultaneous existence in several temporal dimensions. Although the notion of the poetic vision described in the story is rooted partly in the works of Plato as well as in German and Russian Romantic and Symbolist poets, the distinct characteristic of the modern poet highlighted in the story is linked to otherworldly themes. This is how Tsvetaeva describes her last trip with Bely to Charlottenburg which became a suburb of Berlin in 1920:

There remains the final thing: an evening-nighttime excursion with him to Charlottenburg. And this final thing remained in me the perfect vision of a dream [...]. I remember only statues that fell back, crossroads that were traversed, squares that were suddenly skirted, grayness, rose-ness, blueness. I do not remember words except for the abrupt: '*Weiter!* *Weiter!*' that rang out not to where Berlin ended but to where the earth ended.⁹²

The episode features a landscape that reminds the readers of Kandinsky-like abstract paintings and creates a sense of the otherworldly experience.

By contrast, Tsvetaeva depicts her eight-year-old son as a practical person who relies on newspapers to shape his worldview and vision of contemporary life. She depicts him reading the issue of the émigré newspaper *Poslednie novosti* (*Latest News*) published on 10 January 1934. While her memoir starts with the prayer of her daughter Ariadna in 1916, it concludes with the depiction of her son, who had no first-hand experience of Russian pre-revolutionary culture. She affirms that the period between the exclamation of her son 'Bely is dead!' in 1934 and her daughter's prayer featuring Bely in 1916 encapsulates Tsvetaeva's trajectory as a poet.

⁹² Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, pp. 153-154.

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In other words, we can see at play here Tsvetaeva's principle of doubling. While Tsvetaeva presents her son as a boy appreciating facts and enjoying reading newspapers, she portrays herself as a modern poet endowed with a prophetic vision:

Ladies and gentlemen, look closely at the two last portraits of Andrey Bely in *The Latest News*. Approaching you along a kind of walkway, detaching himself from some building, with a walking stick in his hand, in the motionless frozen pose of flight, comes a man. A man? And not that final form of a man that remains after being burnt to ashes? Breathe on it and it scatters? Not a pure spirit? Yes, a spirit in a coat, and on the coat six buttons could be counted, but what count, what weight ever convinced anyone? [...] That picture is an astral picture.⁹³

Tsvetaeva's commentary on the photograph of Bely reveals her conception of the metaphysical power of the photographic image. Tsvetaeva problematises the notions of historical documentation and human memory associated with the press media and documentary films. More importantly, she uses her verbal reproduction of the photographic image of Bely as an anti-elegiac device since she doubts the existence of finality.

It is worth noting here that Tsvetaeva's story suggests that her son Georgii saw the article about Bely's death in the newspaper that she forbade him to read. The negative attitude towards the newspaper *Poslednie novosti* found in Tsvetaeva's story might be partly explained by how in 1933 the newspaper's editors rejected her autobiographical story 'Dom u starogo Pimena' ('House at Old Pimen') featuring Dmitrii Sergeevich Ilovaiskii (1832-1920), a famous Russian historian of modern times whom

⁹³ Ibid., p. 157.

Tsvetaeva met on many occasions through her father (he was Ivan Tsvetaev's father-in-law during Tsvetaev's first marriage to Ilovaiskii's daughter). Tsvetaeva's story about Ilovaiskii and pre-1917 revolutionary youth is full of melancholic and nostalgic overtones as well as references to Ivan Turgenev's verse poem 'Kak khoroshi, kak svezhi byli rozy...' ('How good and how fresh the roses were...').⁹⁴ According to Nina Berberova, Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov, the editor-in-chief of *Poslednie novosti* and a well-established historian, strongly disliked Tsvetaeva's memoirs and found her creative accounts of history incomprehensible.⁹⁵ Berberova fails to mention though that Tsvetaeva was barred from Miliukov's newspaper for several years due to her enthusiastic letter to Vladimir Mayakovsky published in 1927 in the Eurasian newspaper *Versty*. Miliukov interpreted the statement 'The strength is over there' in the letter as an endorsement of the entire Soviet system and, subsequently, he refused to continue with Tsvetaeva's collection of poems *Lebedinyi stan* (*The Swan's Encampment*).⁹⁶

As Simon Karlinsky succinctly points out, Tsvetaeva's conflict with Miliukov and Mark Vishniak's criticism of Tsvetaeva's independence, which he called irresponsible, demonstrate that her disagreement 'with some of the basic attitudes of her fellow Russians went deeper than a quarrel with Soviet or émigré policies or mentality'.⁹⁷ Karlinsky writes: '

⁹⁴ Smith, Alexandra, 'Nostalgic Visions and Mnemonic Figures: Tsvetaeva's Allusions to Ivan Turgenev's Goethian Outlook', in: Andrew, Joe, Offord, Derek and Reid, Robert (eds), *Turgenev and Russian Culture: Essays to Honour Richard Peace*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008, p. 342.

⁹⁵ Berberova, Nina, *Kursiv moi: Avtobiografiia*, Munich: W.Fink Verlag, 1972, p. 195.

⁹⁶ Karlinsky, Simon, *Marina Tsvetaeva: Her Life and Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 77.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

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She refused to subscribe to the cherished Russian notion that good art is always ethical and always edifying and that therein lies its value. [...] Her Goethe-derived respect for the sources of life in all of their manifestations, her preference for the exalted and the lofty rather than for the lowly and the humble went against the grain of the greater part of the Russian nineteenth-century tradition after Pushkin.⁹⁸

Tsvetaeva's image of the poet-vitalist concerned with lofty ideas, as implied in Karlinsky's characterisation of Tsvetaeva's outlook, is strongly pronounced in her portrayal of Bely, whom she associated with modern dance. In an episode describing her recollections of Bely at the Musaget gathering, she remembers Bely's lecture during which he wrote an explanation on the blackboard in a dance-like manner. She depicts him as a man dancing in front of Goethe and Steiner and compares him to David dancing in front of the Ark. The image of Bely dancing mentioned at the beginning of the story become replaced in Tsvetaeva's memory with the image of the flying man reaching out to the transcendental as portrayed in a concluding episode of the story that deals with spectatorship and the way of seeing reality poetically. Tsvetaeva's memoir is written in a way that would not have been approved by the editors of *Poslednie novosti*. This was the most popular Russian émigré newspaper (1920-1940), read even by Stalin,⁹⁹ whose circulation at times reached 40,000. Its editor-in-chief was famous for his economic materialism and his belief in general law of history. 'In his attacks on subjective sociologists,' writes Laurie Manchester, 'Miliukov focused on the metaphysical freedom that the school assigned to personality'. She goes on to say: 'Arguing against the unknowable and non-rational in history, he chided his ad-

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Gul', Roman, 'Ia unes Rossiui', *Novyi zhurnal*, 138/1980, 22.

herents for “continuing to look at will as independent”, as outside historical regularity (*zakonomernost'*). He lambasted Thomas Carlyle’s “cult of heroes”¹⁰⁰.

In contrast to Miliukov, Tsvetaeva stands closer to Nikolai Kareev, a Russian specialist on French sociology whose book *Sushchnost' istoricheskogo protsessa i rol' lichnosti v istorii* (*The Essence of the Historical Process and the Role of Personality in History*)¹⁰¹ was criticised by Miliukov. In this book Karaev foregrounded the view that, although all people play a role in history, it is difficult to ignore that a few socially committed individuals, who were non-conformists and non-state personages, contributed to change in society due to the new ideas and pioneering methodologies.

Unlike Miliukov, who downplayed the role of exceptional individuals in history and ignored the role of peasant culture and religious traditions in Russian history, Tsvetaeva used Russian folk culture and religious beliefs for the construction of her vision of Russian national identity. She would have been totally opposed to Miliukov’s personal disdain for Muscovy and his belief that the primitive state of Russian mentality was inferior to European and was one of the main causes of the absence of a culture in Russia. According to Miliukov, ‘the most striking feature of Russian national character is the complete lack of well-defined identity and the lack of strikingly-expressed national traits’.¹⁰² Tsvetaeva shared Bely’s interest in primordial forms of thinking and in Russian folk culture as well as in supposedly Asian traits of Russian national identity. That is why *Plennyi dukh* portrays Bely as a truly Russian modernist

¹⁰⁰ Manchester, Laurie, ‘Contradictions at the Heart of Russian Liberalism: Pavel Miliukov’s Views of Peter the Great and the Role of Personality in History as an Academic, a Politician, and an Émigré’, *Russian History*, 37/2010, 108.

¹⁰¹ Kareev, N.I., *Sushchnost' istoricheskogo protsessa i rol' lichnosti v istorii*, 2nd edn, St Petersburg: Stasiulevich, 1914.

¹⁰² Miliukov, P., *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul'tury v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, St Petersburg: Mir Bozhii, 1897, p. 6.

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poet who, despite being traumatised by the historical upheavals, believed in the invincible rhythms of Tsvetaeva's poetry and in the immortality of the creative self.

OLGA SOBOLEV

THE REPRESENTATION OF ALEXANDER BLOK IN SOVIET CINEMA

Alexander Blok was a keen film-viewer and had a deep fascination with the newly emerging art of moving pictures,¹ the development of which in Russia coincided with the years of his poetic prime. His interest in this art, however, remained largely unrequited, for neither he (as an eminent cultural figure of his age) nor his poetry were ever mentioned on the Russian or subsequently on the Soviet screen up until the late 1940s.

At first glance, such a long-term neglect (at least as regards the Soviet years) is not entirely surprising. As a major poet of the Symbolist school, Blok could hardly feature in the Party's ideological campaigns, which prevailed throughout the history of Soviet cinema. In fact the existence of any instances of Blok's representation in Soviet film-culture, let alone their role and function in the configuration of the canon, is far more puzzling than their prevalent absence. Blok's representation in film, so far largely outside the principal purview of Blok studies,² deserves a somewhat more in-depth consideration, for it is closely related to aspects of the Russian cultural tradition associated primarily with the status and concerns of the national intelligentsia: its identity and self-representation. These aspects will constitute the main focus of this paper, which will centre primarily on the analysis of the first four references to Blok in Soviet cinema: in the films *Svet nad Rossiei* (*Light upon Russia*, 1947), *Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse* (*Spring on Zarechnaia Street*, 1956), *V dni Oktiabria* (*In the October*

¹ Vishnevskii, Veniamin, 'Aleksandr Blok i kino', *Iskusstvo kino*, 9/1936, 48-52.

² On the possible involvement of Blok in silent cinema see Vishnevskii, 'Aleksandr Blok i kino', and Lakshin, L., 'Neizvestnoe pis'mo Al. Bloka o kino', *Iskusstvo kino*, 5/1956, 46-47.

Days, 1958) and *A zori zdes' tikhie* (*And the Dawns Here Are Quiet*, 1972). An attempt is made to change the conventional angle adopted in discussing the impact of cinema on canon formation, and to look at it not as an expression of ideology or a value judgement of the dominant class, but as a problem in the constitution and distribution of cultural capital. Introduced by Pierre Bourdieu as a key-concept of his theories of canon formation,³ cultural capital is regarded as a symbolic asset, whose possession can be displayed upon request, and which thereby is seen as a carrier and a marker of its possessors' intellectual credentials, their socio-cultural potentialities, and their status. This kind of capital may be in fact more significant in its social effects than the ideological dimension of the canon, especially if one takes into account the relative nature of the ideology-related aspects and their inherent dependence on the context of their institutional representation.

The question of the representation of Blok in Soviet cinema can be approached from two different perspectives: the film adaptations of his literary oeuvre (his poetic output, his works for theatre and his prose), and the biographical life-screening of the poet, who was one of the most colourful representatives of the Russian pre-revolutionary intellectual elite. Neither the Bolshevik, nor pre-World War II Stalin years seem to provide any substantial material for either of these two aspects. There are two unfinished script drafts produced by Blok in 1919-1921 for the 'Komissii istoricheskikh kartin' ('Commission of Historic Pictures'), a cinematographic project maintained by Gorkii,⁴ and his positive written response (dated 1918) to the theatre

³ Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, London: Routledge, 1984.

⁴ Vishnevskii, 'Aleksandr Blok i kino', p. 50.

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and film-director Alexander Sanin,⁵ on the possibility of their potential collaboration, which apparently was never put into action.⁶

This is not to say that classical literature dropped off the cinematic radar of the time. Starting from the mid-1920s, Soviet Russia had begun to reconfigure the platform of its cultural agenda. After the 1925 Party directive to construct ‘socialism in one country’⁷ (Trotskii’s idea of a world-wide revolution had been gradually phased out), the new focus referred to continuity and tradition. The country was building a nation (associated with the new demonym of the ‘Soviet people’), which required a radical shift in the government’s ideological policies: a step back to conservative values, a vindication of the past and a reestablishment of the concept of cultural heritage.⁸ This trend, sometimes dubbed the ‘Great Retreat’,⁹ was of lasting importance, for since then ‘the veneration of a (selective) canon of “progressive” writers, artists and scholars from the pre-revolutionary period’ has constituted ‘a pillar of Soviet cul-

⁵ An associate of Stanislavskii, an actor and a director of the Moscow Art Theatre, Sanin gained world-wide fame for his 1919 screening of Tolstoi’s short story *Polikushka*.

⁶ Lakshin, ‘Neizvestnoe pis’mo’, p. 46.

⁷ The resolution was read by Kamenev, who claimed: ‘Правильной политикой усиления социалистических элементов в нашем хозяйстве мы докажем, что и при замедленном темпе мировой революции социализм должен строиться, может строиться и в союзе с крестьянством нашей страны, будет строиться и построен будет’ (‘By pursuing the right policy, namely reinforcing the socialist elements in our economics, we will show that despite the reluctant tempo of the international revolution, socialism must be built, can be built together with the representatives of peasants in our country, and it will be built’) (*XIV Konferentsiia Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov)*, Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1925, p. 267). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Russian sources are my own.

⁸ Clark, Katerina and Dobrenko, Evgenii, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, p. 3; Elliot, David, *New Worlds: Russian Art and Society 1900-1937*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, pp. 22-26.

⁹ Tromly, Benjamin, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 6.

ture'.¹⁰ Consequently, a whole series of films, based on adaptations of the literary classics were released on the Russian screen in the mid-thirties. These include Aleksandr Ivanovskii's screening of Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Gospoda Golovlevy* (*The Golovlev Family*, 1934) and Pushkin's *Dubrovskii* (1936); Gogol's *Zhenit'ba* (*The Marriage*), directed by Erast Garin in 1937; Ostrovskii's *Bespridannitsa* (*Without a Dowry*) by Iakov Protazanov (1937); and Chekhov's *Chelovek v futliare* (*A Man in a Case*) by Isidor Annenskii (1939). According to Evgenii Dobrenko, who offered a penetrating analysis of the Soviet film-industry of this era, such films played a crucial role in re-shaping the past and creating an ideologically correct model of history (subsequently infiltrated into the consciousness of the mass-viewer): this Russia of Ostrovskii, Gogol and Chekhov, 'this land of idiots, nonentities, "human lampoons", this country drowning in mud and idleness, this good-for-nothing Russia could not be grieved for'¹¹ – everything was falling apart and the revolution was inevitable.

In the same vein, the authors who happened to be included in the canon were supposed to enhance the provenance of the desired model. In the numerous film-biographies released in the late-twenties and thirties, they were presented as severe critics of the tsarist order, as irrevocable libertines and misfits, suffocated by the perilous atmosphere of the oppressive regime. The examples were manifold and included Vladimir Gardin's *Poet i tsar'* (*The Poet and the Tsar*) – the screen version of the life of Pushkin (1927) with Evgenii Cherviakov in the leading role; as well as Aleksandr

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ Dobrenko, Evgeny, *Stalinist History and the Production of History: Museum of the Revolution*, trans. Sarah Young, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 118.

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Ivanovskii's story of Lermontov's venture in *Kavkazskii plennik* (*The Prisoner of Caucasus*), produced in 1930 with Boris Tamarin in the role of the poet.¹²

Alexander Blok had an ambivalent position within the framework of this newly configured landscape. On the one hand, one of his best-known poems *Dvenadtsat'* (*The Twelve*) (and to a certain extent *Skify* (*The Scythians*)) was firmly associated with the idea of socially-engaged writing and thereby ingrained in the Soviet literary canon.¹³ On the other, Blok largely belonged to the cohort of the Silver Age authors (deemed decadent in the Soviet age), who were considered ideologically poor and aesthetically subversive, stimulating an unnecessary predilection for romanticism that led away from the reality of socialist goals. Kamenev and Trotskii, for instance, always

¹² Regarding Pushkin, the list can be continued by *Iunost' poeta* (*The Poet's Youth*), directed by Abram Naroditskii (1936) and *Puteshestvie v Arzrum* (*Journey to Arzrum*) by Moisei Levin and Boris Medvedev (1936); regarding Lermontov – *Maksim Maksimych* (directed by Vladimir Barskii in 1927, with Ivan Tarchanov as Lermontov), and *Lermontov* (directed by Albert Gendelshtein, 1943).

¹³ For more detailed analysis see Sobolev, Olga, 'The Symbol of the Symbolists: Alexandr Blok in the Changing Russian Literary Canon', in: Hodgson, Katharine, Shelton, Joanne and Smith, Alexandra (eds), *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017, pp. 123-156. *Dvenadtsat'* was repeatedly reprinted in the post-revolutionary years; the last editions of the poet's verse to appear in his lifetime, *Za gran'iu proshlykh let* and *Sedoe utro*, were published in 1920 respectively by Grzhebin Publishing House (Petrograd-Berlin) and Alkonost (Petrograd). The first Soviet edition of Blok's collected works (12 vols) appeared only in 1932-1936 (Leningrad, Izdatel'stvo Pisatelei); the previous one (9 vols.) was published in Berlin (Epokha) in 1923. As regards the poet's diaries and letters, two volumes of Blok's diaries appeared (though incomplete) in 1928, while his letters were released sporadically and in various editions: *Pis'ma Aleksandra Bloka*, ed by S.M. Solov'ev, G.I. Chulkov, A.D. Skaldin and V.N. Kniazhnin (Leningrad: Kolos, 1925) – with four introductory articles by the editors, who were also the addressees of the letters; *Pis'ma Aleksandra Bloka k rodnym* (2 vols.), ed. by M.A. Beketova (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademiia, 1927-1932); *Pis'ma Al Bloka k E. P. Ivanovu*, ed. by T.S. Volpe (Moscow-Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1936). Blok's letters, notebooks and diaries were published in a more or less complete and systematic form only in the 1960-1963 edition of the poet's collected works (8 vols.); a few years later (1969) his biography by A.M. Turkov appeared in the popular series 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei' ('Life of Extraordinary People').

denied the revolutionary spirit of Blok's writings: 'To be sure, Blok is not one of ours,' wrote Trotskii in 1924, 'but he reached towards us. And in doing so, he broke down'.¹⁴ Although straight after the Revolution Blok held several positions in cultural administrative bodies, he quickly became disillusioned with the Bolsheviks and their methods – as he once put it in a conversation with Gorkii, his 'faith in the wisdom of humanity' had ended.¹⁵ By spring 1921 he was already terminally ill. His application for permission to leave the country in order to obtain the required medical treatment in Finland was rejected by the Politburo (endorsed by Lenin's personal resolution),¹⁶ and he passed away in four months' time. It was largely due to *Dvenadtsat'* that Blok has never been effaced from the palette of recommended canonical reading. His poetry was hardly suitable for legitimising the emerging order; his own pro-Bolshevik credentials were less than perfect, and as a result, his name remained largely in the shadows throughout the decades of Stalin's era. Leonid Trauberg, an eminent Russian film director, testified that he and his fellow artists from the experimental studio *Fabrika eksentricheskogo aktera* (FEKS, Factory of Eccentric Actors, 1921-1926) secretly preferred Blok to Mayakovsky: 'he was much closer to our hearts, but we were deeply ashamed to voice these feelings'.¹⁷

The first (though failed) attempt to conjure the image of Blok on the Soviet screen was made in 1947, when Sergei Iutkevich directed the Bolshevik epic *Svet nad Rossiei*, dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The film was loosely based on Nikolai Pogodin's drama *Kremlevskie kuranty* (*The Chimes of the*

¹⁴ Trotskii, Leon, *Literature and Revolution*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005, p. 111.

¹⁵ Gorkii, Maksim, 'A.A. Blok' (1923), *Sobranie sochinenii* (25 vols), Moscow: Nauka, 1973, vol. 17, p. 227.

¹⁶ Shepelev, V.L., Liubimov, V.N., '“On budet pisat' stikhi protiv nas”: pravda o bolezni i smerti Aleksandra Bloka (1921)', *Istochnik*, 2/1995, 34-42.

¹⁷ Shcherbina, V., 'O gruppe estetstvuiushchikh kosmopolitov v kino', *Iskusstvo kino*, 1/1949, 14-15.

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Kremlin),¹⁸ and contained two extra episodes with a reference to Blok, one of the most obvious functions of which was to establish a link between contemporary and pre-revolutionary Russian intellectuals, and thereby to overarch the gap created during two decades of the Stalin era.

Written back in 1939, the play was premiered at the Leningrad Bolshoi Drama Theatre in 1940, and from 1942 had a very successful run in nearly 300 theatres all over the country, including The Moscow Art Theatre (evacuated to Saratov during the years of the Second World War). In the time of ideological crisis in the late Stalin era, when any deviation from the norm could result in severe persecution and the loss of a much-coveted job, one of the most common ways of avoiding problems was to produce a film-adaptation of an 'ideologically tested' theatrical play. In this sense Pogodin's drama seemed to be a safe bet for the director, because the MAT's production of *Kremlevskie kuranty* was awarded a very prestigious Stalin Prize in 1942. Iutkevich, nonetheless, asked the playwright to prepare a new script-version for filming, drafting it specifically from the vantage point of post-war realities and concerns.¹⁹

Although victory in the Second World War bore witness to the worthiness of the Soviet system, the country's economy had been devastated in the struggle.²⁰ Roughly a quarter of its capital resources had been destroyed, and the industrial and

¹⁸ The collaboration of Pogodin and Iutkevich had already been tested with time; it started in 1938 when Iutkevich successfully directed *Chelovek s ruzh'em* (*Man with a Gun*) - a screen adaptation of Pogodin's earlier revolutionary epic.

¹⁹ Iutkevich, Sergei, 'Istoriia zagublennogo fil'ma', *Sobranie sochinenii* (3 vols.), Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1991, vol. 2, p. 182.

²⁰ Harrison, Mark, 'The Soviet Union after 1945: Economic Recovery and Political Repression', *Past and Present*, 210/2011, suppl. 6, 104.

agricultural output in 1945 fell far short of the pre-war levels.²¹ In 1946 the War was followed by a disastrous harvest failure; industry was striving to restore its peacetime production; and once again there was a distinct shortage of specialists, needed for intensive economic recovery. In comparison, Russia's post-revolutionary years were only marginally less devastating. The country was physically and socially shuttered, and an inspiring example of the legendary past was seen as a reasonable means of coping with the depressing future.

Svet nad Rossiei was centred on two major issues that had direct parallels in the late-forties: the country's economic recovery and the position of the intelligentsia as an active agent of the latter. The main plot-line concerned the implementation of project 'Gosudarstvennaia kommissiia po elektrifikatsii Rossii' (or 'GOELRO', the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia) – the first-ever Soviet plan for national economic growth, initiated by Lenin in 1920. Hence the title – *Svet nad Rossiei* – which, while referring directly to the essence of the project, evoked a whole array of ideologically charged connotations, including the bright future of the Soviet country (light at the end of the bleak 'tunnel' of the present); as well as the enlightened attitude of its Party leaders. The success of the plan depends on the collaboration of the intellectual elite, and more specifically on Anton Zabelin – the leading specialist in hydroelectricity, who finds himself out of touch with the new system and makes a statement by selling matches in a market place in the centre of Moscow. He has to be persuaded to work for the Bolsheviks, and Lenin triumphantly succeeds in persuading him, assisted by the Red sailor Rybakov – a member of Lenin's personal guard, who also happens to be a suitor of Zabelin's daughter Masha.

²¹ Gregory, Paul R., 'National Income', in: Davies R.W. (ed.), *From Tsarism to the New Economic Policy: Continuity and Change in the Economy of the USSR*, 1990, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 237-247.

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To emphasise the worthiness of the effort (but not only this), Iutkevich opened his film with a short prologue, in which the already aged Rybakov, now a veteran of the Second World War, recollects his revolutionary ventures, while looking at the grandiose panorama of the Volkhov hydroelectric station²² – a prime embodiment of Lenin's, and in the film Stalin's, prophetic vision. This prologue (which, in terms of its formal features, was one of the best examples of late-Stalin stylistic monumentalism) had a very specific artistic function. On the one hand, it served as a motivation for *Svet nad Rossiei*'s story; on the other, while providing a textual illustration of its glorious realisation, it offered a new trajectory of thinking for the generation of contemporary Soviet intellectuals, who were clearly invited to reconnect with the cohort of their pre-revolutionary predecessors, and thus to revise the cultural paradigms imposed by the existing canon.²³

In *Svet nad Rossiei*, the latter aspect was further accentuated through the reference to Blok – the iconic figure of his time, who appeared as a meta-narrative double of Zabelin-type intellectuals and, generally speaking, as a conceptual synecdoche of the Russian intelligentsia as a whole.

In the play, Zabelin's daughter Masha and Rybakov have their date at the foot of Gogol's statue in Moscow (a silent symbol of the intelligentsia's domain). Iutkevich decided to change the setting of the episode, relating it to Blok rather than to

²² This is the oldest serving hydroelectric station in Russia: completed in 1927, it was a major part of Lenin's GOELRO project.

²³ According to Benjamin Tromly, the resurgence of the intelligentsia in the post-war Soviet Union was indicative of the country's socio-political trends: 'the valorisation of the figure of the intelligent as an agent of enlightenment and civilisation' and thereby as a contributor to the overall common goal of communist construction was seen as a positive (not to say superior) attainment of the system, which 'distinguished intellectual life in the USSR from that of non-socialist twentieth-century societies', where intellectuals were often understood 'as a class apart, divided from the "laity" by the esoteric and lofty nature of their pursuits' (Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*, p. 8).

Gogol, and thus giving it more immediacy and more of a flavour of the colourful atmosphere of Moscow in the early twenties²⁴. As one of the most debonair dandies of the time, and a founder of the *Fabrika eksentricheskogo aktera*,²⁵ he was intimately familiar with contemporary cabaret-culture, the poets' cafés and the places where artistic gatherings were held, among which the most popular was Café Pittoresque. Situated on the Kuznetskii Bridge (nowadays it houses the Exhibition Hall of the Russian Union of Artists), its glass cupola was decorated by Iakulov and Tatlin. Mayakovsky read his poems at the café's opening night in January 1918, and it was there that Vermel and Krol staged (March 1918) Blok's drama *Neznakomka* (*An Unknown Woman*). Iutkevich decided to bring these two performances together for the Masha-Rybakov date, thinking that the aesthetic contrast Blok-Mayakovsky (reciting his *Levyi marsh* (*Left March*)) would provide an excellent metapoetic comment on Masha (the intelligentsia) and Rybakov's (the people) contextual juxtaposition (which calls to mind Blok's own speech of 1908 on the aforementioned dichotomy²⁶). Iutkevich wrote:

Как хорошо переплетутся стихи Блока с несколько грубоватым
восприятием искусства Рыбаковым и восторженно
интеллигентским отношением к этому искусству Маши. Погодин
согласился. И мы перенесли свидание в кафе. Там мог бывать и

²⁴ Iutkevich, 'Istoriia zagublennogo fil'ma', p. 182-184.

²⁵ In 1922, Iutkevich together with Kozintsev, Trauberg and Kryzhitskii released a manifesto called *Eksentrism* (*Eccentrism*), which became a theoretical platform of FEKS.

²⁶ In this speech, 'Narod i intelligentsia' ('The People and the Intelligentsia', 1908), Blok challenged the intelligentsia's assumption of its community with, and leading position towards the Russian people and appealed to it to surrender its 'high' culture to the popular 'stikhiinost' ('element'): Blok, Alexander, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, Moscow: Pravda, 1971, vol. 6, p. 267.

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читать стихи Маяковский [...] В фильме Маяковского играл Борис Ливанов. Он был необычайно похож на поэта и хорошо декламировал 'Левый марш'. К сожалению, от всего этого осталась одна фотография в гриме.

Blok's poems would make a wonderful highlight [...] for Rybakov's somewhat crude perception of art and for Masha's lofty 'intelligentsia-like' attitude to the latter. Pogodin agreed; and we transferred their date to the café. It was there that one could also find Mayakovsky reading his poems [...] In the film Mayakovsky was played by Boris Livanov. He looked very much like the poet and was a brilliant performer of his 'Left March'. Alas, all that remains of it now is just a photograph of him in makeup.²⁷

Regrettably, the Café Pittoresque sequence was cut out of the revised version of *Svet nad Rossiei* owing to Stalin's unfavourable comments on its inappropriately subversive ideological platform: 'the film should be considered politically flawed', stated the verdict of the Ministry of Culture, 'the sequence with the performance of Blok's play in the poets' café is unnecessary. Such a bohemian line is completely unacceptable in a serious political film'.²⁸

²⁷ Iutkevich, 'Istoriia zagublennogo fil'ma', p. 183-184.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 194. On 15 May 1947 the original version of the film was successfully approved by the Art Committee of Mosfil'm (led by Sergei Eisenstein), but in a couple of days Iutkevich was called back to Moscow and presented with a whole list of negative comments from the Ministry of Culture. It was revealed that Stalin himself was not particularly happy with the film: 'Значит эта запись его замечаний?', inquired Iutkevich, 'Нет, он ничего не сказал. Но товариш Большаков, который, как обычно, сидел сзади, у микшера, фиксировал неодобрительные хмыканья товарища Сталина. Затем с отметками этих реакций он поехал к товарищу Жданову, они вместе их расшифровали и составили прочитанное вами заключение.' ('Is this the record of his remarks? No, he said nothing specific. But Comrade Bol'shakov, who in his usual way sat at the synthesiser in

Iutkevich, on the other hand, was particularly satisfied with the artistic upshot of the 'Blok sequence', it was well embedded in the film's structure, echoing and counterbalancing another episode related to the poet, which concerned the conflation of the political and the aesthetic and, therefore, touched upon the issues of the intelligentsia's ideological engagement. In distinction from the majority of Silver Age authors Blok was an example of those who at least at the beginning showed their allegiance to the Bolshevik cause.²⁹ His poem *Dvenadtsat'* became popular straight after its first publication on 3 March 1918. It was widely performed in Petrograd,³⁰ and recited in the regional propaganda units (*agit-brigady*).³¹ *Svet nad Rossiei* reproduced this reading of Blok's poem to the Red Army soldiers, with the difference that *Dvenadtsat'* was replaced by *Skify* – the last of Blok's poetic compositions, which was written at the height of the First World War and was more in tune with the patriotic spirit of the late-forties.

the back, recorded the disapproving snorts of Comrade Stalin. Then, he took the report card to Comrade Zhdanov, and together they deciphered the record and produced the report you have just read') (Ibid., p. 194-195).

²⁹ By 1924 the major figures of the Silver Age had already fled the socialist country, and did not miss the opportunity to express their critical attitude towards the newly established regime: Gippius and Merezhkovskii had been residing in Paris since 1920, where they were soon joined by Bal'mont; Viacheslav Ivanov was the last to depart for Rome in 1924. Fedor Sologub also had a distinct anti-Bolshevik orientation; in July 1921 he received permission to leave the country, but his wife's death, just two months later, grieved him for the rest of his life. He gave up any thoughts of leaving Russia and died in Leningrad in 1927.

³⁰ Orlov, Vladimir, *Zhizn' Bloka*, Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2001, p. 544. The fact that *Dvenadtsat'* was first published not by the Bolsheviks, but in the oppositional Socialist Revolutionary newspaper *Znamia truda* (Blok, Aleksandr, 'Dvenadtsat', *Znamia truda*, 147/3 March 1918, 2) was never highlighted. From spring 1918 the newspaper was in active opposition to the Bolsheviks and Lenin's politics, and was closed down after the Socialist-Revolutionist uprising in July 1918.

³¹ Evtushenko, Evgenii (ed.), *Strofy veka: Antologiya russkoi poezii*, Minsk-Moscow: Polifakt, 1995, p. 82.

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Blok wrote *Skify* as a challenge to old Europe. The poem was completed on 30 January 1918, and the poet's personal reflections of the time can be found in his diary entry from 11 January 1918:

‘Результат’ брестских переговоров [...] Никакого – хорошо-с. Но *позор* 31/2 лет (‘война’, ‘патриотизм’) надо смыть. Тычь, тычь в карту, рвань немецкая, подлый буржуй! Артачься, Англия и Франция! Мы свою историческую миссию выполним. Если вы хоть ‘демократическим миром’ не смоее позора вашего военного патриотизма, если нашу революцию погубите, значит вы уже *не арийцы больше*. И мы широко откроем ворота на Восток. Мы на вас смотрели глазами арийцев, пока у вас было лицо. А на морду вашу мы взглянем нашим *косящим*, лукавым, быстрым взглядом; мы *скинемся азиатами*, и на вас прольется Восток [...] Мы – варвары? Хорошо же. Мы и покажем вам, что такое варвары. И наш жестокий ответ, страшный ответ – будет единственно достойным человека.

The ‘result’ of the Brest negotiations [...] Nothing. Very well. But the *disgrace* of the last three and a half years (‘war’, ‘patriotism’) has to be effaced. Keep pointing at the map, you German scoundrel, you bourgeois bastard. Stay restive, England and France. We shall fulfil our historical mission. If you fail to wash away the disgrace of your military patriotism even with ‘democratic peace’, if you ruin our revolution, then you are no longer *Aryans*. And we will open wide the gates to the East. We looked at you with Aryans’ eyes while you had a face. But at the mug of yours we’ll throw our *squinting*, sly and swift glance: we shall *stand before you as Asians*, and the East will spill out onto you

[...] Are we barbarians? Well then. We will show you barbarians. And our brutal and savage response will be the only one *worthy of man*.³²

The pathos of *Skify* lies in Blok's assertion of Russia's special, messianic mission, mysterious and inconceivable to the Western World (Russia the Sphinx and Russia-Scythia). By this time Blok had already made his definitive political and civic choice in favour of what he called 'the music of the revolution',³³ in which he discerned the sounds of historical catharsis. Drained and exhausted by severe disappointments, Blok would die three and a half years later; but at the time he was caught up in the revolutionary storm, driven by a vision of a new world, a new individual, and a new culture. It was this mesmerising 'music of the revolution' that captivated the Red Soldiers listening to Blok's lines in Iutkevich's *Svet nad Rossiei*, and it was this cathartic elevation that resonated in the hearts of the generation of the late forties, who just two years earlier were flushed with their success at the end of the Second World War.

The *Skify*-sequence projected a strong message concerning the spiritual leadership of the cultural elite. Not unlike Rybakov in the café Pittoresque, the soldiers could not remotely grasp the content of the poem, but emotionally they were deeply affected by the 'music' of the verse, by its emotive energy and its candour; and even a charmingly humorous touch with their literal misunderstanding of the word 'Pestum' ('And who exactly is "Pestum"? – Must be an imperialist, a bourgeois') only added to the expressiveness of the performance:

³² Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, p. 324.

³³ See Blok, 'Intelligentsia i revoliutsiia', p. 399.

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Вы сотни лет глядели на Восток,	The West for centuries has looked our way,
Копя и плавя наши перлы,	Absorbed our pearls into profits.
И вы, глумясь, считали только срок,	Derisively you waited for the day
Когда наставить пушек жерла!	When you could hold us in your cannon sights.

Вот-срок настал. Крылами бьет беда,	Now the day dawns. Disaster spreads its wings,
И каждый день обиды множит,	And insults gather to a head.
И день придет – не будет и следа	The day may follow whose sun rising brings
От ваших Пестумов, быть может! ³⁴	No shadow where your Pestum stood. ³⁵

Unfortunately even after a considerable five-month revision, *Svet nad Rossiei* was banned from public screening. Iutkevich was informed that

Товарищ Сталин посмотрел картину, и, очевидно, она ему не понравилась, так как он ничего не сказал, но встал и произнес: 'Покажите остальным членам Политбюро' [...] Нужно понимать это высказывание Товарища Сталина как неприятие картины. Забудьте, что она существовала.

Comrade Stalin watched the film and evidently it did not please him: he said nothing, but stood up and said: 'Show this to other members of the Politburo' [...] This comment has to be taken as a negative. Just forget that this work has ever existed.³⁶

³⁴ Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, p. 244.

³⁵ Blok, Alexander, *Selected Poems*, trans. Peter France and Jon Stallworthy, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2000, p. 111.

³⁶ Iutkevich, 'Istoriia zagublennogo fil'ma', p. 194. The revised version of the film was completed in five months (October 1947), but once again it evoked no enthusiasm from Stalin.

The film, nonetheless, was widely known among cultural circles,³⁷ and had a significant impact on shaping the intelligentsia's notion of identity and self-representation. In this respect, it is sufficient to mention that Sergei Gerasimov – an eminent Soviet film director, who, like Iutkevich, started his cinematic career in the *Fabrika ekstsentricheskogo aktera* – practically replayed the *Skify* sequence in his 1969 environmental epic *U ozera (At the Lake)*, retaining its connotational and stylistic features (the camera work is very similar to that used in *Svet nad Rossiei*, but the group of captivated listeners is now relocated to a provincial library on Lake Baikal).

Considering the film's social and artistic implications, and following Lucien Goldmann's argument that any cultural activity is 'an attempt to respond to a particular objective situation',³⁸ it is worth pointing out that *Svet nad Rossiei* drew upon both dimensions of the intelligentsia's nascent idea of self-realisation – actual (contemporary), as well as figurative (mytho-poetic). As regards the former, in one way or another, the realities of post-war Soviet Russia did highlight this social group's agency and presence on the socio-political stage. It was largely solicited by the economic and political (the atomic race) agenda, and one of the first film-makers to capture this trend was Grigorii Aleksandrov, whose 1947 comedy *Vesna (The Spring)* was essentially an advertisement for the comfortable living conditions enjoyed by Soviet intellectuals. Curious as it may seem, the intelligentsia's growing presence also came to the fore through Stalin's overwhelming fear of the cultural elite in the last years of his

³⁷ Pogodin's account of the filming, as well as a screen version of the script (split into individual frames) was published as early as 1971 (Pogodin, Nikolai, 'Svet nad Rossiei', *Iz istorii kino*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971, vol. 8 pp. 64-145).

³⁸ Williams, Raymond, 'Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann', *Problems in Materialism and Culture. Selected Essays*, London: Verso, 1980, p. 16.

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rule. In the words of Konstantin Simonov,³⁹ who at that time used to be a frequent guest at the Kremlin, Stalin felt maniacally threatened by the possibility of having a new wave of latter-day Decembrists,⁴⁰ and saw many parallels between the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the late forties. According to Simonov, Stalin was well aware of the intelligentsia's potential and its innate susceptibility to the liberal spirit, suggesting that the end of the Second World War 'showed Ivan to Europe and Europe to Ivan, like Alexander I did in 1813-1814'.⁴¹ This resulted in his paranoid battle against cosmopolitanism of 1946-1948, which by the same token drew attention to the political agency, non-conformism and social significance of the cultural elite, looked upon as 'the teachers of the nation' even in the infamous series of Zhdanov's decrees:

Some of our literary people have come to see themselves not as teachers but as pupils [and] [...] have slipped into a tone of servility and cringing before philistine foreign literature. Is such servility becoming of us Soviet patriots, who are building the Soviet system, which is a hundred times higher and better than any bourgeois system? Is it becoming of our vanguard Soviet literature [...] to cringe before the narrow-minded and philistine bourgeois literature of the West?⁴²

³⁹ At that time Simonov was the Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers and editor in chief of the major literary magazine *Novyi Mir*.

⁴⁰ The Decembrists were the Russian revolutionaries (primarily members of the upper-class intellectual elite) who led an unsuccessful uprising on 14 December 1825 against tsarist autocracy; through their struggle for liberal ideals (and their martyrdom) they provided a source of inspiration to succeeding generations of Russian dissidents.

⁴¹ Conquest, Robert, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*, New York: Viking, 1991, p. 271.

⁴² Roberts, Geoffrey, *Stalin's Wars: from World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 333.

On a mytho-poetic level, all of the above was articulated through the overarching link with the generation of the pre-revolutionary intellectuals, which turned out to be a fairly effective model. It allowed the intelligentsia to reclaim some of its earlier social prestige, and incorporated both this social group's oppositional attitude to the regime (the pre-revolutionary intellectuals were indeed the last generation of the Russian intelligentsia who stood up against the system and at the same time had a real say in politics), as well as its growing ethical and cultural ambitions. The importance of such re-connecting with the past was emphasised in the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam, who pointed out that:

Люди, совершавшие революцию и действовавшие в двадцатые годы, принадлежали к интеллигенции, отрекшейся от ряда ценностей ради других, которые она считала высшими. Это был поворот на самоуничтожение. Что общего у какого-нибудь Тихонова или Федина с нормальным русским интеллигентом? Только очки и вставные зубы. А вот новые – часто еще мальчишки – их сразу можно узнать и очень трудно объяснить, каковы те признаки, которые делают их интеллигентами. Итак, они появились, и это процесс необратимый.

Those who conducted the Revolution and who were active in the twenties belonged to those members of the intelligentsia who rejected their own values for the sake of others they valued more. This was a turning point towards self-destruction. What does some sort of Tikhonov or Fedin have in common with a typical Russian intellectual? Nothing, apart from false teeth and glasses. As regards the newcomers – often still youngsters, one can recognise them straight away; and it is difficult to pin down the features that immediately mark them as be-

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longing to the ranks of the intelligentsia. They have reappeared, and this process is irreversible.⁴³

A telling reference to Blok gave this link a somewhat more iconic quality, which throughout the years was developed into a self-defining cultural trope. To illustrate this, one can refer, for instance, to the well-known Thaw-period film *Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse*, produced in 1956 by Marlen Khutsiev and Feliks Mironer (representatives of the post-war generation of Soviet film-directors, who finished their training in the early fifties). In similar fashion to *Svet nad Rossiei*, and specifically to the ‘Masha-Rybakov’ story-line, the narrative of this film fits into a ‘lady and a tramp’ scenario: a rough working class fellow, Sasha Savchenko, falls in love with his evening-school teacher, Tat’iana Sergeevna – an idealistic and aesthetically refined young lady who spends her time listening to Rachmaninov and has a photograph of Blok on her dressing table. The poet is an emblem of her social identity and a marker of her cultural capital, which ‘the Savchenkos’ of this world do not possess – the division is highlighted in the episode when Savchenko, having accidentally found himself in Tat’iana’s room, takes Blok for her cultured suitor (‘a sweetheart from the capital’), thus losing all hope of gaining access to Tat’iana’s remote, not to say unattainable, world.

The use of Blok’s photograph also made a significant contribution to the overall metatextual dimension of the film-story, which was saturated with the freshness of new hopes of the liberal Thaw. In a way not unlike Blok’s initial fascination with the breath-taking whirlwind of the Revolution, it was imbued with the values of optimism and regeneration, projecting a romanticised aura of the new beginning felt by the So-

⁴³ Mandelstam, Nadezhda, *Vospominaniia*, New York: Izdatel'stvo im. Chekhova, 1970, p. 352-353.

viet intellectuals of the mid-1950s.⁴⁴ Hence the concluding sequence of the film ending on a ‘mnogotochie’ (‘three dots’) punctuation sign – a symbol of open-endedness and potential prospects: ‘Three dots are put at the end of a sentence or a whole story when it is not finished, and many things are still to happen in the future’. Generally speaking, poetry played an important role in heralding new sensibilities and new ethical codes in these years. This was a time when young people tended to read poems spontaneously in open places, stadiums and squares, and such poets as Voznesenskii, Akhmadulina and Evtushenko declaimed their works in the streets to overflowing crowds. Poetry became an iconic emblem of the age, and the self-styled heirs of Blok’s messianic vocation were once again striving to have their say as the consciousness and the ethical vanguard of the nation.

On the one hand, this new generation of intelligentsia was very different from its customary nineteenth-century image: ‘rather than a tight circle of savants, conspiracy of revolutionaries, artistic elite, or populist movement, the intelligentsia of the 1950s and 1960s was a sizeable and fast-growing cohort of educated professionals inseparable in origin and lifestyle from the rest of the people’.⁴⁵ In *Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse* this was symbolically projected in the episode where the lines from Blok were recited by Savchenko’s younger sister – a teenaged working-class girl, appropriately educated to be interested in reading the poet’s romantic verse in bed in the evenings:

Мы встречались с тобой на закате,	We met with you at the sunset,
Ты веслом рассекала залив.	You were cutting the gulf with an oar.
Я любил твоё белое платье,	I loved your white dress,

⁴⁴ Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*, p. 129.

⁴⁵ Denis Kozlov and Gilburd, Eleonory, ‘The Thaw as an Event in Russian History’, in: Kozlov, Denis and Gilburd, Eleonory (eds.), *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 55.

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Утонченность мечты разлюбив.⁴⁶ Though disenchanted with the refinement of
the dream.

As an epitome of the newly shaped Soviet intelligentsia, she was seen as the one who was going to carry Blok's legacy into the future.

On the other hand, the intellectuals of the day still retained 'their fathers'' emphatic civic mindedness, lyricism, and purposeful conflation of art and ethics. Combined with a firm belief in their messianic predestination, their idealistic perception of the present suggested a strong parallel with Blok's canonical zeal to listen to and to merge with 'the music of the transformation' (if Blok's notion of 'the music of the revolution'⁴⁷ can be understood in a broader sense of the term). In this respect, it is perhaps not coincidental that in the film, straight after the 'Blok's photograph sequence', Tat'iana is shown to be literally plunged into listening to the opening of Rachmaninov's second piano concerto – an illustrative embodiment of Blok's 'music of the transformation'. Written (1901) as a testimony of the composer's major breakthrough after years of deep depression, it did project a powerful feeling of creative regeneration, evoking a strong sense of awakening and rising from the ashes of the past, and of looking fearlessly into ventures that lay in the future.

In the late fifties Blok was seen by the Russian intelligentsia as a figurehead of this regeneration and this new path. As Pasternak claimed in his 1956 poem:

Но Блок, слава Богу, иная,	But Blok is, thank Heaven, another,
Иная, по счастью, статья.	A different matter for once,
Он к нам не спускался с Синая	He did not descend from Sinai
Нас не принимал в сыновья.	And not accept us as sons

⁴⁶ Blok, *Sobranie schinenii*, vol. 1, p. 145.

⁴⁷ Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 399.

OLGA SOBOLEV

Прославленный не по программе	Eternal and not manufactured,
И вечный вне школ и систем,	Renown not according to plan,
Он не изготовлен руками	Outside schools and systems, he has not
И нам не навязан никем. ⁴⁸	Been foisted upon us by man.

A vivid example of this presents itself in the epic screen-drama *V dni Oktiabria*, in which Alexander Blok made his debut as a film character (played by Igor Dmitriev) in 1958. Directed by Sergei Vasil'ev, who, in 1934, in collaboration with his namesake Georgii Vasil'ev, produced a canonical Soviet blockbuster *Chapaev*. *V dni Oktiabria* was an important landmark in the history of Russian cinema: for the first time in many years it showed to the audience such banned figures as Kamenev, Zinov'ev and Trotskii – the old revolutionaries and the leaders of political opposition to Stalin. Blok's poetry was not included in the narrative, but the poet himself featured in an emotionally charged sequence where, in a conversation concerning Russia's prospects of perishing under the Bolsheviks (and contrary to all expectations of his upper-class milieu), he suddenly bursts into praising the moral values of the Russian intellectual elite, indestructible, in his words, in the course of any political change. Not only the poet's screen presence (the fact that he was introduced to viewers in the same setting as Kamenev and Zinov'ev speaks for itself), but also the implications of his controversial sayings, happened to be radically different from the framework of the accepted Stalinist canon.

After Lenin had dismissed the Russian intelligentsia as 'the shit of the nation',⁴⁹ his infamous remark was taken up to justify a sea-change in the Soviet attitude

⁴⁸ Pasternak, Boris, 'Veter', in: *Izbrannoe* (2 vols), Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1985, vol. 1, p. 439; Pasternak, Boris, 'The Wind', in: *Poems of Boris Pasternak*, trans. by Lydia Pasternak-Slater, London: Unwin, 1963, p. 90.

⁴⁹ Lenin, Vladimir, Letter to Maxim Gorkii, 15 September 1919, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi literatury, 1970, vol. 51, pp. 48-49.

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towards the role and position of old-type intellectuals in the process of socialist construction. The so-called ‘philosophers’ boats’ – the Bolsheviks’ scandalous expulsion of the most eminent representatives of the country’s cultural elite (1922-1923)⁵⁰ – would provide one of the most striking examples of the trend. Generally speaking, the aim was to efface remaining links to the old Russian intellectual elite, and to shape the myth of a brand-new Soviet intellectual, born as a result of the all-embracing success in socialist construction and under the supreme guidance of the Communist Party leaders.⁵¹ In the films of the thirties, therefore, the image of an old Russian intellectual largely fell into the cliché of dangerous foe, spineless loser or, in the best possible scenario, eccentric fellow-traveller, like, for instance, the character of Professor Polezhaev (based on the eminent Russian plant-physiologist Kliment Timiriazev) in *Deputat Baltiki (The Baltic Deputy)*, directed by Iosif Kheifits and Aleksandr Zarkhi in 1936.⁵²

The trend found its subsequent elaboration in the late nineteen-forties, when a series of film-biographies of famous Russian scientists was released on the screen (*Michurin*, directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko in 1948; *Akademik Ivan Pavlov* by Grigorii Roshal in 1948; *Aleksandr Popov* by Gerbert Rappaport and Viktor Eisymont in 1949; and *Zhukovskii* by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Dmitrii Vasil’ev in 1950). Marked by an insistence on Russian national superiority, they most typically denigrated the

⁵⁰ Chamberlain, Lesley, *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia*, New York: St Martin's Press, 2007.

⁵¹ Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*, p. 4.

⁵² The intelligentsia’s relationship with the Party was, of course, more multi-layered than this straightforward linear model; it was a complex process of compromises, revaluation and collaboration. As demonstrated in the recent work of Katerina Clark and Evgenii Dobrenko, the intelligentsia had tighter bonds with the Soviet state structures than was commonly imagined: by the beginning of the thirties Russian intellectuals had already ‘assimilated the habits of mind, discourse and practices of Soviet Society’ and their lives were ingrained in the Party’s ‘hierarchical system of patronage and arbitration’ (Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, p. xv).

achievements of foreign researchers, while glorifying the advances of Russian scholars (for example, Popov-Marconi in *Aleksandr Popov*), whose progress was invariably ascribed to their natural genius and diligent labour, their strong ethical convictions, and their indifference to money, honours and material things. An intellectual, as presented in this series, could in theory stay away from politics (or remain an outlandish fellow-traveller), but, in practice, always served some kind of ideological and political purpose – the country was losing the atomic race with the US and was in desperate need of mobilising its intellectual resources. These films, therefore, were never designed to captivate the viewers with an engaging life-story, but constantly reminded them of the importance of the ideological stance.

One of the classic devices in projecting this ideological stand-point was the binary opposition ‘one of us – one of them’ (*свой – чужой*), around which the metatextual framework of the cinematic narrative was commonly constructed (Kartashov – Michurin; Professor Zvantsev – Ivan Pavlov; Zhukovskii – Riabushinskii). The immanent characteristics of ‘one of us’ included an open declaration of one’s loyalty to the socialist regime or at least some criticism of bourgeois mentality, an objection to emigration and a refusal to be involved in any collaboration with the West. The stereotype of ‘one of them’ was subject to change during the period, depending on the political perspective. In the first post-revolutionary years, ‘one of them’ was seen as a bourgeois upper-class intellectual; later on, as an adept of Western science, or one of those who tried to exchange information and establish contacts with foreign fellow researchers.⁵³ Their mercantile interests (Vorob’ev in *Deputat Baltiki*) and unscrupu-

⁵³ For instance, Dr Rozhdestvenskii in *Vo imia zhizni* (1946, directed by Alexander Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits); Professor Losev in *Sud chesti* (1948, directed by Abram Romm) or Miliagin in *Velikaia sila* (1950, directed by Fridrikh Ermler).

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lous actions (stealing letters, manuscripts and ideas, like, for instance, Marconi in *Alexander Popov*) were also highlighted.

The creative and artistic intelligentsia was hardly present in this palette.⁵⁴ It was largely a grey area in Stalin-period film culture, typically avoided by directors on account of its political precariousness. In the words of Nikita Khrushchev, the relationship with this type of intellectuals was always problematic for the Soviet political establishment, as he put it in his memoirs:

The technological intelligentsia is [...] the area where we have not had too many problems. By the very nature of its activity [it] does not interfere in the more complicated spheres of social life, namely in ideology. A more difficult and slippery problem is posed by the creative intelligentsia [...] – people who do not directly add to the material wealth of the society, but whose works provide an inspiration without which man cannot live. Yet our creative intelligentsia suffers more than any other category of people in our society. Materially they are better off than other categories, but spiritually members of the creative intelligentsia are very troubled.⁵⁵

In this sense, *V dni Oktiabria* seemed to represent a daring attempt at probing the shaky ground and exploring the expanding opportunities available to film-makers

⁵⁴ The post-war fashion for screening the lives of composers (*Mussorgskii* of 1950, *Rimskii-Korsakov* of 1952, *Glinka* of 1946 and *Kompositor Glinka (Glinka the Composer)* of 1952) ‘can be put down both to Stalin’s inordinate love of *The Great Waltz*, Julien Duvivier’s 1938 Hollywood life of Johann Strauss, and to the relative ideological safety of music rather than words’: Graffy, Julian, ‘Cinema’, in: Kelly, Catriona and Shepherd, David (eds.), *Russian Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 181.

⁵⁵ Khrushchev, Nikita, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, trans. Strobe Talbott, Boston: Little, Brown, 1974, p. 72.

after Stalin's death. The angle which the film takes on the representation of the Russian cultural elite (emblematised by Blok), and more specifically, its value judgement on the subject of the latter, testify to the non-dogmatic apprehension of the past, as well as to the transformation of national consciousness set off by the early Thaw years. Stylistically, however – and mainly in terms of its psychological credibility, which inevitably had an impact on the content – the film still remained a typical example of the transitional mixed post-Stalin compromise culture, where the newly emerging social agenda was represented through the old, ideologically tested imagery and form.⁵⁶

The screen portrayal of Blok, for instance, fell strictly into the framework of the cliché opposition 'us and them', within which the poet was undoubtedly assigned to the category of 'us'. Blok was shown spending an evening in a bohemian café-chantant, a couple of days before the Revolution. He is sitting all by himself, with his face turned away from the stage-singer – a symbolic statement of his alienation from the decadent crowd, these superfluous people and their obsolete world. His gesture is further accentuated by the comments of John Reed and Louise Bryant (also present in the café) on the meaninglessness of the gathering: 'Why did we come here? All of this is already a matter of the past'. Very much along the lines of the established division, the poet's sober dignity is juxtaposed to the drunken debauchery of the upper-class visitors; and although he does not go as far as pledging his allegiance to the Bolsheviks, it is fully compensated by his highly theatrical scolding of the mercantile mentality of a *petit bourgeois*.

As regards its formal features, this scene was also not very different from the late-Stalin period cinema aesthetics where, in the lack of narrative plasticity, the rhythm was conditioned by transparent, slow-moving monologue-like didactic conversations, built around static ideological clichés – essentially, the episode in the café

⁵⁶ Woll, Josephine, *Real Images: Soviet Cinemas and the Thaw*, London: Tauris, 2000, pp. xi, 3-7.

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was a self-contained tableau frame with a heavily pronounced moralistic message, but it certainly made a definitive point in canonising Blok as a mouthpiece and icon of the Russian intelligentsia of the late 1950s.

This canon was reaffirmed a decade later, when many of the qualities associated with the enlightened utopianism of the generation of the Twentieth Party Congress had already been relegated to mere relics of the past. The image of Blok was still perpetuated (in cultural circles) as a moral compass and an implicit emblem of the intelligentsia's ideals, though acquiring new facets and much more pessimistic and sinister undertones.

An illustrative example can be found in Stanislav Rostotskii's 1972 film *A zori zdes' tikhie*. The film is set in 1942: five young girls from a division of anti-aircraft gunners are sent on a doomed mission to stop a detachment of German paratroopers. During her night-watch duty, Sonia, the only heroine with a university background, characteristically recites Blok's poem 'Rozhdennye v goda glukhie' ('Those born in the years of stagnation'), which is charmingly mistaken for a prayer by her commander the villager Vas'kov.

Рожденные в года глухие	Those born in the years of stagnation
Пути не помнят своего.	Forget now how they found their way.
Мы – дети страшных лет России –	We – children of Russia's tribulation –
Забывать не в силах ничего. ⁵⁷	Forget not a year, not a day. ⁵⁸

Written at the start of the First World War (8 September 1914) the poem certainly had a direct parallel with the war-time narrative of the film story. At the same

⁵⁷ Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Blok, *Selected Poems*, p. 92.

time, the very first line of Blok's poem 'Rozhdennye v goda glukhie', translated literally as 'Those born in the deaf years' had a very specific resonance for contemporary viewers, who had to live through the 'deaf' years of Brezhnev's campaigns, and to experience an abrupt halt to their aspirations, wrecked by the reactionary policies of the new regime. In this respect, it is not coincidental that Vladimir Vysotskii, a cult figure of political and cultural nonconformity of the time,⁵⁹ employed a variation on this very line of Blok's poem in one of his poetic commentaries (1979) on the zeitgeist of these stagnant years:

И нас хотя расстрелы не косили,	And although not all of us were wiped out by executions,
Но жили мы поднять не смея глаз—	We lived unable to raise our eyes —
Мы тоже дети страшных лет России,	We are also children of Russia's horrid years,
Безвременье вливало водку в нас. ⁶⁰	This stagnation poured vodka into us.

In this context, it is worth bearing in mind that the ideological climate of the early 1970s added some extra political dimensions to the previously configured emblem. Blok famously described his disillusionment with the Revolution as corresponding to a state of complete deafness. He did not write a single line of poetry for three years: 'Все звуки прекратились' ('All sounds have stopped for me'), he mentioned to Kornei Chukovskii, 'Разве вы не слышите, что никаких звуков нет?' ('Can't you

⁵⁹ For more detail see, for instance, Zubok, Vladislav, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 330.

⁶⁰ Vysotskii, Vladimir, 'Ia nikogda ne veril v mirazhi', *Sobranie sochinenii* (4 vols.), 1997, Moscow: Nadezhda, vol. 4, p. 357.

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hear that there are no sounds any longer?").⁶¹ From time to time he performed his verse for audiences in Petrograd and Moscow. His last public speech, *O naznachenii poeta* (*On the Poet's Calling*, January 1921), was dedicated to the anniversary of Alexander Pushkin's death. Centred on the conflict between freedom of expression and the absolutism of the tsarist authoritarian state, it contained unmistakable references to the contemporary agenda; and sounded like a doom-laden prophecy for literature in the oppressive climate of the socialist regime. This offered an evocative parallel with the intelligentsia's self-perception in the reactionary environment of Brezhnev's Soviet Union, characterized by moral relativism, political apathy and inward looking underground cultural dissent.⁶² At that time, the intelligentsia started seeing itself as a 'hostage' of the system, and such qualities of Blok's writings as their charming sadness and vulnerability, the sense of spiritual isolation and sacrificial suffering (the circumstances of his death were widely known among the cultural circles) were profoundly internalized. He became an echo of the hopeless cry of a 'trapped' generation, bidding farewell to the end of the liberal Thaw (the fact that in *A zori zdes' tikhie*, Blok's poetry is confused with a prayer is symptomatic in this respect).

After the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) the Thaw for Soviet cinema was essentially over,⁶³ but the following years, nonetheless, became highly significant for the projection of the 'Blok-emblem'. Apart from Gerasimov's *U ozero* and Rostotskii's *A zori zdes' tikhie*, the films in question included Mikhail Kazakov's *Pokrovskie vorota* (*The Pokrovsky Gate*, 1982), which was an adaptation of a much earlier (1974) stage play by Leonid Zorin; and Oleg Teptsov's 1988 debut *Gospodin Oformitel'* (*Mr*

⁶¹ Chukovskii, Kornei, 'Vospominaniia o Bloke', *Sobranie sochinenii* (6 vols), Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965, vol. 2, p. 311.

⁶² Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, p. 299.

⁶³ Woll, *Real Images*, p. xii.

Decorator), set in 1908-1914 and loosely based on Aleksandr Grin's story *Seryi avtomobil'* (*The Grey Car*). In *Pokrovskie vorota*, the aging comedian Arkadii Velurov, who desperately tries to revive his faltering career as well as his image as a lady-killer, characteristically resorts to Blok during his feats of drinking and despair: 'Я тоскую, как Блок' ('I feel sort of under the weather, like Blok'). *Gospodin Oformitel'*'s protagonist, on the other hand, is a successful artist and a friend of Blok – the viewer even has a glimpse of a photograph of them sitting together. The film also contains a reference to Blok's *Balaganchik* (*Fairground Booth*) (a Harlequin jumps through the cardboard window) and to his *Shagi Komandora* (*The Commander's Footsteps*), which is imaginatively intertwined with the narrative.

What unites all these films of the so-called stagnation era is that by this time the figure of Blok had already acquired a distinct sense of double connotation. He was canonised by the intelligentsia – and not only through the medium of cinema – as an icon of its self-identity and a bearer of its cultural capital available for 'the happy few'. In music, Blok inspired Arthur Lourié's choral cantata *Dans le temple du rêve d'or* (*In the Temple of the Golden Dream*, 1919), Shostakovich's lyric song cycle for soprano and piano trio, *Sem' romansov na stikhi Aleksandra Bloka* (*Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok*, 1967), and Sergei Slonimskii's cantata *Golos iz khora* (*A Voice from the Chorus*, 1963-1976); in art, one would immediately think of the series of eye-catching illustrations (in the early 1970s) of the then oppositional artist Il'ia Glazunov. Curiously enough, the majority for whom Blok provided an inspiration were, in one way or another, at odds with the Soviet system (the aforementioned authors are exemplary in this respect), which in itself, and not without reason, had some bearing on the ideological reputation of their source. At the same time Blok's poetry was firmly ingrained in the landscape of the dominant state culture. *Dvenadtsat'* was established in the school curriculum as 'the first poem of the October Revolution in Soviet

literature'.⁶⁴ For years it became a trademark of the poet, and for many it remained the only piece of Blok's writing that they actually knew.

On the one hand, such a dual appropriation is not entirely surprising, for as a carrier of cultural capital, a canonical work can become a vector of ideological motifs not necessarily embedded within the work itself. Blok himself touched upon these issues in his article on Wagner, where he praised artistic omnivalence as a signifier of creative genius:

Почему Вагнера не удалось [...] опошлить, приспособить и сдать в исторический архив, как расстроенный, ненужный более инструмент? Потому, что Вагнер носил в себе спасительный яд творческих противоречий, которых до сих пор мещанской цивилизации не удалось примирить.

Why could they not [...] adapt Wagner, turn him into kitsch and deliver him to a museum as a useless out-of-tune instrument? Because Wagner's oeuvre bore in itself a revitalising poison of creative controversy, which up until now this philistine society has been unable to resolve).⁶⁵

On the other hand, the fact that the icon of the intelligentsia's self-enclosed sub-culture was drawn directly from the officially approved canon (rather than from outside the latter) seems to be fairly disconcerting. The rationale for this can hardly be tied in with restrictions on the distribution and availability of broader cultural material, because the Russian intelligentsia has always had extensive access to the artistic

⁶⁴ *Programma srednei obshcheobrazovatel'noi shkoly*, Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1983, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 408.

sphere that stretched far beyond the imposed frame. More likely, it can be related to the intelligentsia's double position in the post-Stalinist context. This was manifested in its attempt to restore its self-proclaimed cultural and moral leadership (given its lack of access to power), and to adjust its allegedly uncompromising principles to the practical realities of political pressure. Moreover, in the works of modern scholars, this so-called double ethos or double consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia is defined as a quintessential element of this social group's metaphysical platform.⁶⁶ Its origin, according to Vladimir Kormer,⁶⁷ lies in the self-perpetuating love-hate relationship between intellectuals and power-holders, and more specifically in the fact that the communist ideology, in essence, is nothing but the intelligentsia's own indigenous creation.

This conceptual *double entendre* adds yet another facet to the connotational spectrum encompassed by the 'Blok-icon', which was put forward by the Soviet creative intelligentsia at a particularly sensitive stage in its process of self-fashioning. Mythological thinking has always been an important component of this cultural group's discourse and its reflective strategies of self-projection. However the prevalence of this emblem seems to involve something slightly more significant than a simple contribution to the history of representations: it draws extensively on issues of selfhood and identity, and, therefore, allows us to shed more light on certain properties of a socio-cultural group – the intelligentsia – as represented by its artistic contribution to a momentous historical situation.

⁶⁶ Kormer, Vladimir (under the name of O. Altaev), 'Dvoinoe soznanie intelligentsii i psevdokul'tura', *Vestnik RKhD*, 97.3/1970, 8-32; reprinted in *Voprosy filosofii*, 9/1989, 65-79; Grushin, Boris, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia: Zhizn' I-ia, Epokha Khrushcheva*, Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2001, pp. 159-222; Sokolov, Arkadii, 'Demifologizatsiia russkoi intelligentsii', *Neva*, 8/2007, 164-188.

⁶⁷ Kormer, Vladimir, *Dvoinoe soznanie intelligentsii i psevdokul'tura*, Moscow: Progress, 1997, p. 224.

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FROM THE ALTAR TO THE FORUM: THE POST-SOVIET TRANSFORMATION OF
RUSSIAN LITERARY MUSEUMS

Introduction

Poetry is seldom monumental, but contemplating a monument to oneself is what a poet often does. From Pushkin's desire to have his monument rise its head 'higher / Than the Alexandrine column' to Nabokov's hopeful meditation on the day when 'a Russian branch's shadow shall be playing / upon the marble' of his hand, and from Akhmatova's insistence, in *Requiem*, on a specific location, grave and notable, for her monument ('And if ever in this country / They decide to erect a monument to me...') to Brodsky's proclamation that his is 'different! / Its back – to the shameful century...', the figure of a monument is a constant in Russian poetry.¹ Envisaging a memorial to oneself gives poets agency in the canonisation process and adds a finishing touch to their poetic personae: one can think about making a transition from man to stone because it is not the flesh that transforms, but poetic speech. It seems safer that

¹ Pushkin, Aleksandr, *Sobranie sochinenii v 10-ti tomakh*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959, vol. 2, p. 460; Nabokov, Vladimir, *Selected Poems*, ed. Thomas Karshan, New York: Knopf, 2012, p. 125; Akhmatova, Anna, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, trans. Judith Hemschemeyer, ed. Roberta Reeder, Boston: Zephyr Press, 1997, p. 393; Brodsky, Joseph, *Forma vremeni*, Minsk: Eridan, 1992, p. 18. Unless a reference is given to the source in English, translations from the Russian are mine – OV. Brodsky's poem, 'Pamiatnik' ('Ia pamiatnik vozdvig sebe inoi! / K postydnomy stoletiiu – spinoi [...]') is part of a larger body of poems from the early 1960s, in which the figure of a monument is determinative, if not central. Among them are 'Pamiatnik' ('Postavim pamiatnik / v kontse dlinnoi gorodskoi ulitsy...', no date), 'Pamiatnik Pushkinu' (no date), 'Peterburgskii roman' ('Glava 22': 'Ot'ezd. Vot pamiatnik nerovnyi / liubovi, pamiatnik sebe...', 1961), 'A. A. Akhmatovoi' (1962), 'Proshchal'naia oda' (1964), 'Maiatnik o dvukh nogach...' (1965).

way, for stone-words, words of granite and marble, can be imagined as less vulnerable to posthumous mutilation and distortion.

When poets do not want monuments, they anticipate having streets named after them (Osip Mandelstam, 'Eto kakaia ulitsa?..'), build a dirigible in place of a statue (Aleksei Parshchikov, 'Sel'skoe kladbishche')² or reflect on the permanence of something transient and yet eternal that is part of themselves, such as a human skull (Elena Shvarts, 'Elegiia na rentgenovskii snimok moego cherepa'). But what poets rarely welcome is a museum. Consciously or subconsciously, they see it as an anti-poetic space, where objects compete with words in an attempt to capture the viewer's attention. Thus, reminiscing about her epoch, Akhmatova thinks of ladies' hats and boots from the 1900s as 'gone to long rest in a museum' ('davno opochili v muzee') – as if her youth itself were buried there.³ Alexander Kushner is similarly mistrustful of poets' memorial homes. Having discovered a salt cellar in a Gavriil Derzhavin museum, he imagines a different setting for this little item – one full of warm embraces, heated discussions, and shared meals, where 'the second life would begin again', depriving trinkets of the right to 'last longer than our poems' ('vse nichego, tol'ko grustno, / chto podruzhka gribov i supov / dolgovechnee nashikh stikhov').⁴

Although poetry is unpredictable, idiosyncratic, immaterial, and, in the words of Helen Vendler, nourished by 'the senses and imagination' that 'together furnish

² In 'Selskoe kladbishche' Parshchikov parodies, rather than emulates Pushkin's 'Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi' by calling his camping tent a 'mobile, rickety' monument, which, in its turn, is a foundation of the future dirigible, a monument to transience and the transcendental beauty of aeronautics: 'Na kladbishche khimicheskii-zelenom ia pamiatnik vozdvig pokhodnyi, shatkii...': Parshchikov, Aleksei, 'Sel'skoe kladbishche', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 76/2005, 196.

³ 'Moi molodye ruki...' (1940): Akhmatova, Anna, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2001, vol. 4, p. 394.

⁴ 'Solonka': Kushner, Aleksandr, *Nochnoi dozor: vtoraiia kniga stikhov*, Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1966, pp. 37-38.

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rhythms for the poet'⁵, a literary museum embraces permanence and celebrates objectivity. Inspired by the poet's lyrical voice and influenced by his or her artistic identity, it nonetheless focuses on the tangible, measurable, quantifiable residue of a life already extinguished: the walls that 'witnessed' the writer's birth and childhood, bursts of lyrical activity, exile, or death; the manuscripts that capture both the process of writing and its results; the possessions that, fossil-like, seem to arrest time and imprison the self. This durability and materiality have little to do with representing canonical texts as 'repositories of cultural values',⁶ but, as Alison Booth tells us, they can still inspire readers to get closer to their favorite books by seeking 'contact with [the books'] authors through relics, archival remains, landscapes, and houses'.⁷ And this is why literary museums emerge and burgeon in spite of their dedicatees' discontentment. Along with libraries, archives, publishing houses, and universities, they participate in the canonization process not only by extending narratives of authors' biographies or 'the world of the text into physical space', as Booth suggests,⁸ but also by creating a connection between the objective, socially and culturally approved value of memorialized objects that represent an author and the two types of subjective perceptions of reality – the commemorated writer's and the museum-goer's.⁹

⁵ Vendler, Helen, *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1995, p. 1.

⁶ Guillory, John, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Genre Formation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 22.

⁷ Booth, Alison, *Homes and Haunts: Touring Writers' Shrines and Countries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 20.

⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹ Cameron, Duncan F., 'The Museum, a Temple or the Forum', in: Anderson, Gail (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004, pp. 66-67.

In Russia, literary museums are an intrinsic and influential part of the nation's cultural capital. Derived from the first Pushkin museum in Tarskoe Selo (1879), they are exceptionally numerous (there are 256 of them, which means that every seventh museum in the country is dedicated to a man or woman of letters)¹⁰ and geographically spread out.¹¹ In major cities, where many authors used to reside, the bygone presence of literary giants is recognized in an impressive array of memorial apartments or houses. In the provinces, one often needs to go outside of town to reach a former country estate, transformed, over the decades of neglect and misuse, into a memorial to Tolstoi, Nekrasov, Lermontov, or Chekhov. Unlike art galleries, which were founded in great numbers by private entrepreneurs in the first post-Soviet decades, literary museums remain on the federal or regional budget; they almost never get shut down. (The two Chernyshevskii museums are still open, for example, in spite of the waning influence of *Chto Delat'? (What is to Be Done?)* and its author.)¹² If anything, they continue to proliferate: in 1985-2016, for example, five literary museums opened in St. Petersburg alone.¹³ While multiplying, they also centralize. In accordance with

¹⁰ This information is published on the website 'Muzei Rossii', which refers to itself as 'one of the projects of the Rossiiskaia set' kul'turnogo naslediiia': <http://www.museum.ru/mus/type.asp> (accessed 3 January 2017).

¹¹ Zavialov, S.M., Kaulen, M.E. and Sundieva, A.A. (eds), *Rossiiskaia muzeinaia entsiklopediia*, Moscow: Progress, Ripol-Klassic, 2001, vol. 2 (N-Ia), pp. 129-132.

¹² There are Chernyshevskii Museums in Saratov and Astrakhan.

¹³ 'Muzei Anny Akhmatovoi v Fontannom Dome' (founded in 1989), 'Muzei-usad'ba G. R. Derzhavina' (2003), 'Literaturno-memorial'nyi muzei M. M. Zoshchenko, now transformed into 'Gosudarstvennyi literatyrnyi muzei "XX vek"' (the Zoshchenko Museum was founded in 1988 as a branch of the Dostoevsky Museum; in 1993, it became independent; in 2007, it transformed itself into the Museum of Russian 20th Century Literature); 'Muzei peterburgskogo avangarda (Dom M. V. Matiushina) (this was established as Mikhail Matiushin's memorial apartment in 1979; was closed in 1985, burned down in 1990, and reopened in 1999). The Joseph Brodsky Museum, described in this essay, opened for one day in May 2015, although it now remains closed for remodelling and collection development.

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international practice as well as post-Soviet bureaucratic routines, many museums are now grouped in larger clusters, such as the State Museum of Literature in Moscow, with its twelve 'branches', eleven of which are memorial apartments dedicated to single authors.

The influence of Russian literary museums is a complex phenomenon that can be explained neither by the patterns of selection of cultural values characteristic of the modern and postmodern Western civilization as Guillory describes it,¹⁴ nor by Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia's veneration of literary haunts, which may be seen as part of its competition with the West for cultural supremacy.¹⁵ To ascertain and estimate the value of writers' homes in Russia one needs to recognize several factors, the main of which is literature's quasi-religious role in the life of the nation. According to Kathleen Parthé, poetry and fiction provided solace for the downtrodden and a political outlet for the oppressed, serving as a secret communication code for the 'captive people' in Soviet days and in the decades that followed the regime's collapse.¹⁶ Moreover, the cult of literature was not only a form of political resistance, but also part of the Soviet education project – the Bolshevik government wanted the 'masses' to be enlightened through encounters with 'great books' as well as through political propaganda.¹⁷ The combination of state policies geared towards raising literature's political prominence and the Soviet people's embracing literary texts as the new scripture is

¹⁴ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 23.

¹⁵ Caute, David, *Politics and the Novel during the Cold War*, Piscataway, NJ: Transactions Publishers, 2010; Saunders, Frances Stonor, *Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, New York: The New Press, 1999.

¹⁶ Parthé, Kathleen F., *Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics between the Lines*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁷ Hoffmann, David Lloyd, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 220.

one of the reasons why writers' homes acquired a near-sacral status in a state notorious for its violent atheism.

The majority of Russia's literary museums were established during the Soviet era. Products of the totalitarian regime which was grounded in 'the belief that truth is something we create or construct, not something we discern or discover',¹⁸ they relied on the aesthetic principles of Socialist Realism and the ideological doctrines of Marxism-Leninism to document the country's literary past and present. And yet, like other literary institutions 'constructing truth' for the reader and viewer, writers' memorials would not have fulfilled their propagandistic and pedagogical function, had they operated merely as outlets of state ideology. Their cultural appeal – and thus, ability to transmit the Soviet value system – depended on how well a museum could fashion the environment associated with a writer's life and a history of literary creation into a narrative that would be comprehensible and appealing to museum-goers. The Iasnaia Poliana or Pushkinskie Gory memorial literary estates owed their success to such skillfully composed narratives. Although still delivering a surplus of heavy-handed political messages, they invited visitors to step into Tolstoi's and Pushkin's 'worlds' and thus experience the erasure of the border between the writers' past – the romanticised and nostalgically embellished pre-revolutionary Russia – and their own, often meagre and caged lives.

Catriona Kelly aptly characterises the mode in which Soviet cultural memory operated as 'the grandiose rejection of official commemoration and the substitution of a magnificently egotistical alternative cult of self'.¹⁹ For Soviet literary museums,

¹⁸ Krancberg, Sigmund, *A Soviet Postmortem: Philosophical Roots of the Grand Failure*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994, p. xiv.

¹⁹ Kelly, Catriona, *Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 27-28.

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finding a balance between politically sanctioned Soviet commemoration practices and the often dissenting sensitivities of the people who looked at literary memorials as places of worship or routes for nostalgic escapes into the past, meant presenting writers' lives as empty, historically 'objective' shells that could be filled at will with any kind of 'subjective' meaning – whether a state-generated political dogma or a moment of personal communion with the poet. The museums' indebtedness to such carefully preserved or skillfully fabricated settings and the museum-going rituals they engendered helps to explain why many writers' homes in Russia now appear to be frozen in time. Although from the 1990s onwards some of Russia's literary museums chose to undergo a series of reforms, which allowed them to disconnect from the politics, culture, and national identity of the abolished regime, the majority of them continue to exemplify what James V. Wertsch calls a 'schematic narrative template' of cultural memory – the 'generalized schema' grounded in the cultural tradition, patterns of identity, and knowledge structures that evolved through the decades of surviving in an oppressive social climate.²⁰

These days, literary museums in Russia continue to be important cultural dominators, the significance of which is recognised by their benefactors (the state and state-funded grant-giving organizations) and creators (museum curators) alike. What differentiates them from their Soviet predecessors, however, is how differently they use 'schematic' and individualized 'narrative templates' for the representation of the national literary past. Although most of them continue to promote a politically charged cultural agenda, not every museum director or curator is now willing to conform to the modern-day ideology of the Putin-Medvedev state. This is why, in spite of the overwhelming majority of literary museums in Russia relying on government support, they are far from being conceptually, visually, or institutionally alike.

²⁰ Wertsch, James V., 'The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory', *Ethos* 36.1/2008, 122-124.

The goal of this essay is to demonstrate how literary museum culture in Russia has evolved and diversified over the last twenty-five years. Relying on Iurii Tynianov's famous antithesis, I suggest that a small group of innovative literary museums has now split from the majority that may be characterized as archaic.²¹ I also argue that the narrative templates and design that the 'innovators' embrace belong to the earlier cultural paradigm, namely, political reforms of the last decade of the twentieth century, while the mission and communication strategies of the 'archaists' seem to be better attuned to the nationalist, anti-liberal ideology of the modern-day Russian state. Less contradictory may be my thesis that the literary museums aspiring to introduce new commemorative paradigms are primarily dedicated to twentieth-century authors, especially poets who made notable pronouncements on the transformative nature of time, the ambivalence of history, and the culpability of governments in manipulating collective memory.

To clarify the distinction between innovative and archaic literary museums, I have assembled media reports, records of my own visits to writers' homes, and interviews with contemporary curators. An analysis of these sources allows me to compare the museums' ways of addressing their visitors through exhibition design, organisation and management of memorial space, and public outreach. I deconstruct the narratives about authors' lives they present to the public and the interactive decisions they make to keep it involved in remembering, venerating, and canonising Russian authors in order to demonstrate that the literary memorials' ability to attract and cultivate a distinctive, easily identifiable body of patrons is predicated on their willingness to replace the 'schematic narrative template' of a traditional documentary exhibition with

²¹ Tynianov, Iurii, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, Leningrad: Priboi, 1929. Tynianov coined the terms 'archaists' and 'innovators' to differentiate between two intellectual and aesthetic forces behind the development of Russian Romanticism.

an open-ended dialogue between a curator and a visitor or, even broader, between the discourse of the past and that of the present. Among the contemporary literary museums that I have visited for research and interviews are the Nikolai Nekrasov, Gavriil Derzhavin, and Anna Akhmatova Museums in St. Petersburg; the Vladimir Mayakovsky Museum and the Marina Tsvetaeva Cultural Centre in Moscow; and the Joseph Brodsky Museum, which is yet to be fully launched in Russia's 'cultural capital'.

Metaphysical Conservationism: Literary Museums as 'Shrines'

In her seminal *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*, Stephanie Sandler suggests that an archaic literary museum is modelled after a shrine.²² Using the Pushkin Museum in St. Petersburg as an example, she identifies such features of sacralized museum spaces as their 'mediat[ion] between the spiritual and the material' (they 'invest displayed objects with spiritual qualities'); their 'dual temporality' ('time can be made to seem to stop in these places'); and their claim on being 'repositories' of the commemorated author's spirit.²³ Sandler's analysis of Russia's cultural mythologies of the Soviet era is partly based on the premise that the transformation of a secular-type cultural institution into a devotional place occurred because of the Soviet people's need to satisfy their suppressed spirituality. Another reason why this is happening may be what Boris Groys calls 'a secularized historical transcendence' characteristic of modern museums in general.²⁴ According to Groys, when European culture embraced the idea that society, rather than God, was responsible for preserving its

²² Sandler, Stephanie, *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 78.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79, 80.

²⁴ Groys, Boris, 'The Struggle against the Museum; or, The Display of Art in Totalitarian Space', in: Sherman, Daniel J. and Rogoff, Irit (eds), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 148.

past, museums took it upon themselves to create ‘the illusion of cultural immortality’. Soviet museums, however, did not merely replace the ‘divine memory’ with a collective project of safeguarding material objects invested with historical value.²⁵ Formed within a totalitarian paradigm geared towards a timeless communist utopia, they also used a variety of aesthetic and rhetorical means to connect Russia’s artistic and literary heritage to the magnitude and perpetuity of the Soviet state – and thus assert their own theological function.

Although religion has become a fundamental, if not enforced, reality of Russia’s life, contemporary Russian curators, the director of the State Hermitage Mikhail Piotrovskii included, continue to call their museums ‘sacred places’.²⁶ Thirty years ago, though, they not only used such terms, but also looked for philosophical and metaphysical justifications of their work, relying heavily on such concepts as ‘time’ and ‘afterlife’ to validate their efforts. Thus in the late 1980s, Semen Geichenko, then director of the Pushkin Museum in Mikhailovskoe, recapped the literary museum’s mission as, first and foremost, conservation of the poet’s past and its invocation in the present. His book about Mikhailovskoe is a panegyric to the place of Pushkin’s exile and creative revival – as well as an attempt to affirm the shrine-like status of the memorial space:

Mikhailovskoe! It is Pushkin’s house, his fortress, his corner of the earth, where everything speaks to us about his life, thoughts, expecta-

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Having joined the polemics about the handing over of the St. Petersburg’s St. Isaac’s Cathedral – formerly a museum – to the Russian Orthodox Church, Piotrovskii famously announced that, for him, any museum is a ‘sacred place’: Piotrovskii, Mikhail, ‘Mikhail Piotrovskii: Po mne tak muzei – sviatoe mesto’, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 29 March 2017, <https://rg.ru/2017/03/29/reg-szfo/mihail-piotrovskij-po-mne-tak-muzej-sviatoe-mesto.html> (accessed 1 April 2017).

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tions, hopes. Everything, everything, everything: flowers as well as trees, grass as well as rocks, paths as well as lawns. [...] When people die, things remain. Voiceless witnesses to the joys and sorrows of their former owners, they continue to live their special, secretive life. There are no soulless things, there are, however, soulless people.²⁷

Himself a venerated figure in Russian museum studies, Geichenko claims that the former Gannibal manor in the Pskov Region is the place where Pushkin's soul resides. He sees in the poet's sojourns in Mikhailovskoe events of momentous importance. Imagining them is enough for Geichenko to proclaim that time stops on the memorial estate, while people and matter undergo astonishing transformations: material objects become animated, museum-goers who do not believe in the sanctity of the place lose their claim to immortality ('There are no soulless things, there are, however, soulless people'), and even the ever-changing nature stops evolving. According to Geichenko, flowers, grass, and trees on the banks of the Sorot' are 'witnesses' to Pushkin's presence, which makes them suspended in the eternal present.

Metaphysical conservationism, as Geichenko's attitude towards poetic memorial space may be deemed, continues to permeate Russian museum culture today. It is especially pronounced among literary museums, which have inherited the Soviet model of a static, if not lethargic, memorialisation of writers' existence in a given apartment, house, city, and, in a broader sense, Russia as the land of artistic greatness. Contemporary visitors, especially those who travel to Russia from the United States and Western Europe, notice this peculiarity and comment on it:

²⁷ Geichenko, Semen, 'Pushkinogor'e', *Roman-gazeta*, 1(1055)/1987, 12.

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Russian apartment museums may occasionally look like American house museums, but it's a superficial resemblance. Fundamentally, American museums are about remedial education and conversion, introducing new audiences to culture and soliciting an emotional response. The lack of public funding that afflicts most of them is also their primary strength, forcing them to constantly seek new audiences and new sources of support. The Russian museum is about worship, often cult-like and insular. The difference in how these spaces are used is as vast as the difference between a megachurch and a sacred shrine.²⁸

This opinion of a modern-day visitor, cited in the *Washington Post*, points out the continuing proliferation of museum 'shrines' in Post-Soviet literary museum culture. Spanning a vast terrain, from Mikhailovskoe to Iasnaia Poliana and from Taganrog to Chita, Soviet literary museums not only marked the location sanctified by the presence of a national hero, a literary figure of artistic, historical and political value, but also turned it into a sacral space that invited spiritual purification, self-reflection, mourning, and mystical revelry outside of a direct religious context. With rare exceptions, their modern-day heirs still operate according to the model of reverence and consecration.

The St. Petersburg Nekrasov Museum is located at 36 Liteinyi Prospekt. Between 1857 and 1877, the poet Nikolai Nekrasov used his apartment in that building as the editorial headquarters of the journals *Sovremennik* and *Otechestvennye zapiski*, which he edited. The museum features a half-dozen rooms furnished in the style of the era: heavy drapes, tables covered in green broadcloth, a full-sized stuffed bear – a

²⁸ Kennicott, Philip, 'Rooms with a View of Russian Artistic History', *Washington Post*, 19 October 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/rooms-with-a-view-of-russian-artistic-history/2012/10/19/1b232202-cd24-11e1-8bcb-202fdaafb096_story.html?utm_term=.b656b7e688a9 (accessed 1 April 2017).

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threadbare tribute to the skill of a nineteenth-century taxidermist. There are many writing-desks (two of them placed side-by-side in one room: one formerly belonged to Chernyshevskii and the other to Nekrasov) and even more soft chairs. The air is stuffy, the light is dim, felt slippers are mandatory for every visitor. Why take such precautions? Why cannot even a thin ray of modernity penetrate these gloomy shadows? Justifying their approach in promotional publications, the museum staff point out the unyielding weight of historicity associated with the apartment. They quote Pavel Gaideburov, a journalist who often visited Nekrasov at the editorial offices of *Sovremennik* and who claimed that ‘the history of these rooms is the history of the literary relations of the entire era, the history of Russian journalism’.²⁹ It is apparent that the curators believe the memorial space to be the sole repository of the ‘atmosphere’ in which Panaev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Turgenev, Uspenskii, Mikhailovskii, Chernyshevskii, and other writers and journalists of Nekrasov’s circle toiled and socialized. Gaideburov’s statement, however, loses its rhetorical bite if one considers that the museum’s presentation of the past borders on forgery. A great share of the artefacts on display is not authentic; many of them are imitations or ‘conjectures’ of the objects that might have been part of the *Sovremennik* and *Otechestvennye zapiski* milieu. The museum’s website addresses this predicament rather coyly, saying that the exhibitions ‘recreate the type of dwelling characteristic of the second half of the 19th century’.³⁰ But it provides no explanation for the substitution, leaving it up to the visitor to resolve the paradox. One of the solutions that comes to mind is that the inviolability of

²⁹ Vasil’eva, I.M., Popova, N.I., Rybalko, B.N., Shchukinskaia, R.S., ‘Literaturnye muzei Leningrada’, in: Kochedyshina, T.V. (ed.), *Leningrad*, Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1987, p. 32.

³⁰ Muzei-kvartira N.A. Nekrasova, <http://museums.artyx.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000005/st001.shtml>, 2013 (accessed 3 January 2017).

this semi-accurate, mind-numbing space is centered on the curators' attempt to recreate history by restoring its – hypothetical – backdrop.

Even when archaic literary museums endeavour to transcend reality and acknowledge a variety of cultural and historical narratives that are worthy of documentation and propagation, their exhibitions remain examples of ideological petrification. They display ideas frozen in the context of their era and preserved under glass together with other forms of 'humanity's heritage'. The Derzhavin museum newly opened in St. Petersburg, for example, has proclaimed its mission to promote the eighteenth-century Russian literary tradition and *Weltanschauung*. And yet, when setting up an exhibit about literary salons of the 1770s, its curators took care only to restore 'the relatively authentic interior' of a salon. In the opinion of Sergei Nekrasov, director of the All-Russian Pushkin Museum (of which the Derzhavin House is a branch), the recreation is to 'help the visitor sense the atmosphere of literary circles of that era, which brought together many young litterateurs who would soon turn into the brightest representatives of the Russian Enlightenment'.³¹ One look at yet another assembly of stuffed chairs and velvet drapes, however, confirms that Nekrasov and his colleagues have failed to melt the permafrost of materiality and thus release the vibrancy of salon conversation, the heatedness of the writers' discussions, and the sharpness of their literary jokes. Instead, they rely on the old museum gimmick: high-minded forgery. Sharing Geichenko's belief that people equipped with a particular kind of 'soul' can make inanimate objects 'speak', the curators of the Derzhavin museum expect visitors to refer to their pre-existing knowledge of the era and use their imagination without giving them either motivation, or help.

³¹ Nekrasov, Sergei, *Muzei G.R. Derzhavina i russkoi slovesnosti ego vremeni*, St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Zimina, 2006, p. 3.

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In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon argues that contemporary museum-goers want to experience documentary exhibits and art shows as cultural participants, not passive consumers'.³² New information technologies provide quick access both to a variety of information sources and broader cultural perspectives. This is why participants in present-day literary commemorations expect museums to recognize their right 'to respond and be taken seriously'. According to Simon, they also appreciate 'the ability to discuss, share and remix what they consume'.³³ The Nekrasov and the Derzhavin museums demonstrate unwillingness to engage their visitors in sharing and co-creating the narrative that curators constructed for them. But this does not mean that post-Soviet curators lack awareness of the archaic, shrine-like appearance of Russian literary museums or that they are willing to adhere to obsolete museum-going rituals. A heated polemic about the form and mission of a literary memorial is one of the central features of post-Soviet museum culture. It focuses on visitor participation as an individual's ability to establish connection between the nation's need to preserve its cultural heritage and his or her own capacity to construct personal narratives about the past.

Post-Soviet Literary Museums in Search of a New Mission

The International Council of Museums (ICOM), established in 1946 and now encompassing 30,000 members from 136 countries, defines museum as 'a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education,

³² Simon, Nina, *The Participatory Museum*, Santa Cruz, Calif.: Museum, 2010, p. ii.

³³ Ibid.

study and enjoyment'.³⁴ This definition is meant to delineate the mission relevant for any museum, be it a major art gallery, a mid-sized *Naturkundemuseum*, or a very small exhibition dedicated to local history and folklore. Its most problematic part is the phrase referring to the 'service to society and its development', because, as Russia's tempestuous history has repeatedly demonstrated, society is often conflicted about who should serve it and how, while its development is rarely in the hands of its people. For a literary museum, even if it were established through a grass-roots effort, 'service to society' means either replicating political ambitions and aesthetic principles of the cultural institutions located at the very top of hierarchical state bureaucracies, such as national academies, or ascending to that level. The latter happened to the All-Russian A. S. Pushkin Museum, which, in 1937, became the state's principal testament to 'the great national poet, [...] victim of the foul regime of Nicholas [II]' and which now declares that its exhibitions are of 'encyclopedic significance' to the people.³⁵ Although the two mission statements are more than seven decades apart, the declaration of the museum's acquiescence to the legacy of the revolution made by the government-controlled media on its behalf and the curators' current claim to possess knowledge of great national significance are similar. They position the Pushkin Museum as the mouthpiece of the government and its nationalist policies, with the museum's authority magnified by its operating in the name of the enlightenment.

³⁴ 'ICOM Statutes adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007', *International Council of Museums*, <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>, 2007 (accessed 15 December 2013).

³⁵ *Leningradskaya Pravda* of 6 February, quoted in Mazur, Tatiana, "'Segodnia na nashei ulitse prazdnik!'" K istorii muzeia-kvartiry A.S. Pushkina', *Neva* 2/2013, <http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2013/2/> (date of access: 16 December 2016); Vserossiiskii muzei A.S. Pushkina, 'Literaturno-monograficheskaya ekspozitsiya "Zhizn' i tvorchestvo A.S. Pushkina"', 2013, <http://www.museumpushkin.ru/info/literary-exposition.html> (accessed 17 January 2017).

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According to Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins, the unnerving synthesis of ideological subservience and pedagogic confidence characteristic of the Soviet and, in greater part, post-Soviet literary museum culture, stems from the preeminence of literature in the modern curriculum, which, in its turn, is a consequence of nineteenth-century nationalism. Literature's becoming the centerpiece of any humanities course, Graff and Robbins assert, 'reflected its promise as a political instrument for the socializing of the otherwise heterodox groups into the mainstream of national culture' as well as emphasised society's belief that 'the literature of the native tongue [...] was a superior means of acculturating the raw, uncultivated masses'.³⁶ Russian logocentrism and the Soviet endorsement of literature as the nation's most valuable and all-inclusive symbolic capital continue to dominate the Post-Soviet cultural landscape – a fact that recent interviews with Russian museum curators illuminate. Vladimir Tolstoi, director of the Lev Tolstoi Museum in Iasnaia Poliana and, as of May, 2012, cultural adviser to President Putin, proclaimed in an interview to the radio station *Golos Rossii* that the mission of Russia's cultural institutions is to 'eliminate illiteracy' and parry what Tolstoi sees as the attacks of modern technology and mass culture 'upon the foundation of our national identity – the Russian language'.³⁷ Tamara Mel'nikova, director of the Lermontov Museum in Tarkhany, is similarly committed to bringing 'uncultivated masses' closer to their heritage, which, for her, is preserved in the conservative, authoritarian, economically hermetic world of an aristocratic country estate. Mel'nikova is confident that her main job is to re-create early nineteenth-century Rus-

³⁶ Graff, Gerald and Robbins, Bruce, 'Cultural Criticism', in: Greenblatt, Stephen and Gunn, Giles (eds), *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992, p. 422.

³⁷ Tolstoi, Vladimir, 'God kul'tury v Rossii proidet pod znakom "Doloi negramotnost"! *Golos Rossii*, 10 October 2013, http://rus.ruvr.ru/2013_10_10/Vladimir-Tolstoj-God-kulturi-projdet-pod-lozungom-Doloi-negramotnost-3683/ (accessed 20 March 2017).

sia through a series of open-air festivals, guided tours by curators dressed in period costumes, and society balls for high school students. Identical to Tolstoi's mission, her desire to attract younger audiences to the museum is part of a quest for the preservation of Russian national identity. 'We can awaken interest in Lermontov and his works by attempting to open up to the young the world that fashioned him. It would be great if our museum could make children understand that [the poet] was formed not by computer, not by any kind of [mass] entertainment, but by this – the real Russia, accessible to all', Mel'nikova says.³⁸

Apart from the dubiousness of the 'real Russia' concept – how accessible and authentic is it, after all? – the goals both museum directors have set for themselves and, in a more general sense, for all Russian *Kulträger*, are essentially honourable. But they do not seem realistic, and, moreover, they demonstrate that the institutions run by Tolstoi and Mel'nikova closely follow the nationalist political agenda of the Putin-Medvedev government, with its emphasis on 'traditional Russian moral values' and the cultivation of 'patriotism by means of reclaiming Russia's historical and cultural heritage'.³⁹ Even in the twenty-first century, the literary museums Tolstoi and Mel'nikova speak for continue to be 'political instruments' of the current government. While replicating earlier cultural paradigms, they also follow the Soviet model of literary institutions' dependence on state ideology.

The ICOM definition contains a reference to the 'tangible and intangible heritage of humanity', another concept that provides a deeper insight into the conflicted status of contemporary literary museums in Russia. Most of them attempt to preserve

³⁸ Mel'nikova, Tat'iana, 'Ozhivshaia epokha: interv'iu direktora muzeia-zapovednika "Tarkhany" T.N. Mel'nikovoi dlia "Uchitel'skoi gazety"', Tarkhany: Gosudarstvennyi Lermontovskii muzei-zapovednik, 20 February 2013, <http://www.tarkhany.ru/events/news/31> (accessed 16 December 2016).

³⁹ 'Osnovy gosudarstvennoi kul'turnoi politiki', *President Rossii*, 14 May 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/administration/21027> (accessed 1 April 2017).

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material culture while ignoring the vital role they can play in the study, elucidation, and translation of ideological and cultural narratives of the past. The ‘tangible heritage’ is evidently always there in the form of memorial space as well as the writers’ personal belongings, letters, books, and manuscripts, but the ‘intangible heritage’, such as concepts, opinions, and interpretations, is often missing. This is one of the reasons why Dmitrii Bak, director of the multi-branch State Museum of Literature in Moscow, finds contemporary museum work so daunting. He complains that the old exhibition strategy does not work and acknowledges that he abhors dark cases with books and manuscripts that are lined up unimaginatively at the level of the visitor’s navels. In a recent interview, Bak admitted that his institution’s new mission was ‘not about book presentations’, but rather, about ‘systematically streaming into people’s consciousness – by osmosis – what great literature can be and continues to be, so they can feel how great it is really, watch how it’s crafted’.⁴⁰

Bak’s goal is to build a museum of literature of the new type, so that its visitors can themselves participate in the construction of a narrative about Russia’s literary past. His understanding of contemporary museum-goers’ freedoms and limitations is obvious and refreshing. For example, not only does Bak state that the task of showcasing prose and poetry these days is complicated by literature’s lacking a visual component, but he also acknowledges that for the modern, techno-savvy individual, the image, and not the word, is the preferred vehicle of communication with the past, especially if this takes place in an artificially created information space. Recognising that the abstract nature of documentary exhibits ‘is a huge problem’, Bak insists on supplementing the ‘tangible’ parts of literary museums’ collections with the pictorial

⁴⁰ Abrams, Dennis, ‘Russia Re-Imagines the Role of the Literary Museum’, *Publishing Perspectives*, 1 March 2013, <http://publishingperspectives.com/2013/03/russia-re-imagines-the-role-of-the-literary-museum/> (accessed 2 January 2017).

and virtual material that traditional curators consider not only ‘intangible’ but also inauthentic:

[N]o one really thought about it when [...] there was no Internet with its boom of the visual. Now the visual occupies a primary position in culture, while literature [...] remains an incorporeal thing. We cannot simply exhibit literary relics in the hope that this will advance our contemporary’s understanding of literature.⁴¹

Reiterating Bak’s ideas is Marina Loshak, now director of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, and before that, director of the ‘Manezh’ gallery, the biggest state-supported exhibition centre in Moscow. Loshak is also willing to expand the archaic museum space into the visual and virtual realms, but she takes the idea of ‘intangible heritage’ even further, suggesting that a contemporary museum needs to offer its visitors a chance to get in touch not only with the past, but also with themselves. Spurning the idea of a museum as a temple or shrine, Loshak recommends that it turns itself into a ‘living place’ (*mesto zhizni*) – a ‘space where visitors can spend their time well’.⁴² Thus for Bak, Loshak, and also their colleagues at writers’ museums of the innovative type,⁴³ the development of the new language in which they will communicate with their visitors means turns a site of veneration into a place for contextualising, exchanging, and generating ideas. In a way, they suggest that the ‘tangibility’ of liter-

⁴¹ ‘Novye muzeishchiki: Bak, Loshak i drugie nedavno priglashennye direktora muzeev – o tom, chto izmenitsia’, *Afisha-Gorod*, 14 March 2013, <http://gorod.afisha.ru/archive/new-museum-heads/> (accessed 23 January 2017).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Among those I know, the Akhmatova Museum and the Museum of Russian 20th Century Literature, both in St. Petersburg, the Bulgakov and Mayakovsky Museums, both in Moscow, and the Khlebnikov Museum in Astrakhan stand out as innovative.

ature as part of national cultural heritage may now become less important. The literary museum that positions itself as a site for community-building, integration, and transformation of cultural narratives, begins to direct its efforts not only at objects, but also at the people involved in preserving the continuity of the literary process.

Between Tradition and Innovation: The Mayakovsky and Tsvetaeva Museums

Echoing Bak's and Loshak's opinions is Nina Popova, director of the Anna Akhmatova Museum in St. Petersburg. Like her younger colleagues, she believes that by replacing the schematic monological narratives characteristic of Soviet-style writers' memorials with a dialogical interaction with visitors would help undermine the museums' sacral functions. Summarizing the difference between archaic and innovative cultural institutions in terms similar to Sandler's, Popova insists that a literary museum in modern-day Russia should stop playing the role of an 'altar' and instead become a 'forum'.⁴⁴ In her opinion, the second mission is more relevant, because 'its ability to construct meaning is grounded in the needs of contemporary generations. A museum should not impose meaning on its audience, but must articulate it in the dialogue with patrons, [modern] writers, and other participants of an unrestricted cultural environment'. 'A shrine,' Popova says, 'has other duties, and my museum, I personally, have no interest in them'.⁴⁵

The distinction outlined by the director of the Akhmatova Museum is crucial. It helps to explain why the proliferation of museum 'altars' in Russia continues simultaneously with the broadening influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, the liberation of Judaism, the popularity of Buddhism, and the expansion of Islam. The re-emergence of actual shrines in Russia does not lead to the obliteration of the old cul-

⁴⁴ Personal Interview with Nina Popova, 8 July 2013.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

tural model that replicates some of their functions, because the only mode of existence for an archaic literary museum is reverential. In fact, its worship of literature is closer to a cult than to religion: the revered writer ends up being sacrificed on the altar of timelessness. Being innovative for a museum is much more challenging and thus requires a greater effort on the part of curators and their audiences. The role of a forum presupposes the difficult work of interpretation of ideas and perpetual re-consideration (rather than re-creation) of *history*, in which everyone – the provider of intellectual content as well as its recipients – gets involved.

Sadly, Popova's affirmation of the innovative museum's mission – to serve as a 'forum' – may seem outdated to those who are aware of the country's shift to the right. Her optimism is evocative of the late 1980s, when, in Marcus Levitt's words, the state was 'taking steps to win a disaffected intelligentsia over to its side by promises to limit the government's monopoly over the institutions and production of culture'.⁴⁶ Levitt compares the brief period of 'Glasnost' to the events of an even earlier era, namely, the moment of relative liberal indulgence that led to the unveiling of the Pushkin Monument in 1880 in Moscow. In his opinion, 'alternative forums for political life' were lacking around that time, and the intelligentsia, assisted by the press, used the Pushkin Celebration to fill in the void.⁴⁷

Levitt's *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* does not elaborate on the types and forms of 'alternative forums' for political as well as for cultural self-expression that emerged in post-Perestroika Russia, but the fact that several of Russia's ground-breaking literary museums opened – or were conceptually transformed – between 1985 and the early 1990s testifies to their ability to fulfill an

⁴⁶ Levitt, Marcus, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989, pp. vii-viii.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. viii.

urgent social function. The Vladimir Mayakovsky Museum in Moscow happens to be one of the innovative cultural venues. In the opinion of the art critic Grigorii Revzin, this architecturally inimitable space, with its avant-garde artwork and ‘levitating’ installations, its lack of reverence for the archive (curators suspended manuscripts and memorial objects in the air, along with stage sets, plaster-cast theatrical props, and old newspapers), and its slanting walkways leading, in a Guggenheim-like fashion, to the only memorial space – the poet’s room, – is not ‘about Mayakovsky. It is the museum of 1989 – the Perestroika museum. And one feels it strongly there. Even in the installations, the main anti-hero is an armchair, which at times is an autocrat’s throne, then a bureaucrat’s chair, and then it expands into the symbol of the Soviet state [...]’.⁴⁸ For Revzin, Perestroika’s main drive was the consciousness of the intelligentsia which, a quarter century ago, was able to control the public discourse and govern a variety of the newly emerged forums. The art critic suggests that it is the ‘unbelievable drive’ of the era and the newly liberated people’s ‘force of emotions’ and ‘confident freedom of speech’ that allowed designers and curators of the Mayakovsky museum to solve the difficult problem of ‘structuring space through poetry’.⁴⁹

Not every post-Perestroika literary museum has retained its initial innovative modus operandi, though. The Cultural Centre ‘Marina Tsvetaeva’s House-Museum’ also came into being in the time of liberal reforms and post-Soviet society’s re-evaluation of Russia’s turbulent history. Located at 6 Borisoglebskii Pereulok in Moscow, it opened in 1992, after many attempts at restoring the house in which Tsvetaeva and her family rented an apartment in 1914-1922. But unlike the Mayakovsky museum, which has been consistently eager to make political statements and shape its visi-

⁴⁸ Revzin, Grigorii, ‘Muzei dovol’no ostrogo mgnoven’ia’, *Kommersant Weekend*, 15/ 23 April 2010, 25.

⁴⁹ Ibid. The Mayakovsky Museum is now undergoing major renovations, which will probably lead to a complete restructuring of the exhibition space.

tors' opinions about the nation's recent past, the mission of the Tsvetaeva House has remained reconciliatory. The museum celebrates Tsvetaeva's transformation from a youthful, child-like aspiring author to one of her generation's most significant poets and contemplates the rift between the two Russian literatures – the one, evolving within the confines of the Soviet Union, and the other, developing in France, Germany, and the Czech Republic, where hundreds of writers, Tsvetaeva among them, emigrated in the early 1920s.⁵⁰ By establishing the impressive 'Arkhip Russkogo Zarubezh'ia' ('Russian Emigration Archive'), easily accessible to scholars, producing a three-volume biographical dictionary *Rossiiskoe zarubezh'e vo Frantsii* (*The Russian Emigré Community in France*),⁵¹ publishing dozens of volumes of archival materials and also creating a searchable online database on Russian cultural life abroad, the Tsvetaeva museum has made it its mission to bring the legacies of forgotten émigré authors back to the attention of readers. Thus its efforts have contributed not only to the reconstruction of the canon, but also to post-Soviet society's re-evaluation of Russia's cultural capital. That said, due to its focus on the past and its refusal to encourage the comparison between past and present, the Tsvetaeva museum represents not a revolutionary, but a post-revolutionary cultural institution. Although capable of 'neutralizing political ideologies which set the classes in opposition to one another',⁵² it is unwilling to contribute to the contemporary public discourse, including discussion on the current state and future of the Russian diaspora abroad.

⁵⁰ The recognition of émigré literature as a vital part of the national literary heritage has become one of the cultural markers of Perestroika. See, for example, Latynina, Alla and Dewhurst, Martin, 'Russian Literature in the Post-Soviet Period', *Reference Guide to Russian Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 64-69.

⁵¹ Mnukhin, L., Avril, M. and Losskaia, V. (eds), *Rossiiskoe zarubezh'e vo Frantsii, 1919-2000: biograficheskii slovar'*, 3 vols, Moscow, 2008-2010.

⁵² Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 136.

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The Tsvetaeva Cultural Centre's attempt to remain neutral may be the root of some of its other weaknesses, including the museum's choice of featured biographical narratives. Its exhibition policy is traditional, if not backward: curators downplay the catastrophic imprint of the 1917 revolution on Tsvetaeva's life and tone down her struggle with famine, sickness, and the death of her second child, Irina. Choosing to portray the memorial space as 'happy' and 'cosy', they have set the memorial apartment back in the pre-revolutionary era, when, in the words of the museum guide, 'Marina's hospitable home enchanted her friends with its intricate furnishings, abundance of antique trinkets, scores of books, furry skins on the floor, the fire in the fireplace, and the atmosphere of playfulness and inspiration that ruled over the place'.⁵³ Neatly furnished with mahogany book cases, carpets, busts, vases, fireplace screens, and other attributes of a well-to-do home, Tsvetaeva's memorial rooms come to life only when the tour-guide reads from the poet's diaries or describes the devastation of the first years after the revolution by quoting from Anastasiia Tsvetaeva's 'Marinin dom' ('Marina's House'):

An engraving, taken out of its frame, was still hanging on one of the walls, but on the opposite wall, there was nothing. The couches that had previously stood there were missing. The dining table has disappeared, too. The empty part of the room that it had previously occupied is where they lived now. A simple little table was standing closer to the fireplace, with notebooks, papers, and an ink-pot placed on it. Next to this hearth of creativity, the hearth of nourishment smouldered weakly: above the silenced tongues of the romantic fireplace flames, like their modest shadow, a little stove towered, on its short legs. [...] Here Alia's millet gruel bubbled <...>. It would be replaced with Marina's

⁵³ Kul'turnyi tsentr Dom-muzei Mariny Tsvetaevoi, *Marinin dom*, Moscow, no date, p. 2.

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beans, bought from someone at the black market (food for the brain).
And the inevitable black coffee. All around, desolation reigned.⁵⁴

This tragic narrative provides a striking counterpoint to the reconstructed well-being of the pre-revolutionary bourgeois family and creates an unsettling effect of time arbitrarily warped, of history spurned. But where the contrast between Tsvetaeva's short-lived happiness and the gaping wound of her losses becomes especially apparent is in the nursery room, fitted out with exhaustive precision, with baby cribs, children's books, decorative rugs, and toys. It looks as if both Ariadna, Marina's elder daughter, and Irina had just stepped outside to play. No matter how cheerful the stuffed fox and the porcelain dolls are, other documents confront and negate the painstakingly re-created sense of family happiness. The photograph of the two girls, placed on a podium in the centre of the room, reminds the visitor that only one of them would live, and that even Ariadna's life would be heartbreakingly arduous.

Ten years ago, patrons could catch the ever-present draught of discontent in Tsvetaeva's house by reading the poems from 1917-1919 scribbled, in imitation of the poet's hand, on the wall-paper above the couch or the desk. But, to the disappointment of the old-timers ('Glue the wall-paper with the poems back!' reads one of the entries in the museum's Visitors' Book), these traces of Marina's anguish are now gone. Elena Il'ina, deputy director of the Tsvetaeva Museum, explains the curatorial decision by the museum's new undertaking – to change the common perception of the poet. In the 1960s-1990s, Ilyina says, Tsvetaeva's admirers saw her as 'femme fatale', the product of turn-of-the-century Moscow bohemia. But now, the curator believes, it is time to stop cultivating this dramatic image:

⁵⁴ Tsvetaeva, Anastasiia, *Neischerpaemoe*, Moscow, 1992, p. 144.

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Tsvetaeva was a very domestic person. For her, husband, children and the family nest were very important. This is why our museum became more ‘homey’, and the permanent exhibition has acquired an emphasis on family relations (Marina Ivanovna and Sergei Iakovlevich Efron, Marina and her girls, the Efron family) [...]. We do not pointedly refuse dramatisation, but we have, indeed, added more details to our exhibition that allow us to portray if not the happy, then the productive side of Tsvetaeva’s life in this house. Yes, there was famine, there was Irina’s death, but then she lived in this house for seven years, and only a short part of that time turned out to be catastrophic. We want to step out beyond Tsvetaeva’s recollections and show not the break of Marina’s soul – for it did not break – but her formation as a poet.⁵⁵

Il’ina’s statement offers an interesting comment on her museum’s perception of the contemporary museum audience. It seems that the curators of the Tsvetaeva House see their visitors as people whose opinion about the poet has been shaped by the cultural stereotype previous generations of poetry lovers embraced. Setting out to change this skewed impression of the author about whom they feel better informed as well as more proprietary, the museum simplifies its visual narrative and even re-adjusts the idea of ‘tangible heritage’ by restoring, and even refabricating, Tsvetaeva’s losses. (Just as it happens at the Nekrasov Museum, many objects on display there are ‘period pieces’ chosen for their approximation to the originals).⁵⁶ This new twisted perception of cultural demand, together with the traditional approach to understanding

⁵⁵ Personal interview with Elena Il’ina, 10 July 2013.

⁵⁶ Il’ina noted: ‘We have almost no authentic furniture. With rare exceptions. But we do have the objects that Anastasiia Ivanovna [Tsetaeva] began to buy in antique stores in the 1960s, when she returned from exile’: Personal interview with Elena Il’ina.

authenticity, is quite revelatory. They point out yet another important aspect of the shifting cultural paradigm, namely, the present-day literary museums' commitment to involving their visitors in the process of interpreting and re-evaluating history. But while the Tsvetaeva Cultural Centre affirms its neutrality regarding Russia's historical experience, other memorial writers' homes begin to take a more active stand towards representing the past. One of them is the Anna Akhmatova Museum in St. Petersburg, which, according to its own count, in 2016 alone attracted five times more young people to its exhibits and public events than in the previous year.⁵⁷

A Literary Memorial as a Forum: The Anna Akhmatova Museum

A visit to the Akhmatova Museum helps to understand why and how literary museums of the innovative type could serve as a transitional link between the evolving Post-Soviet public sphere and a fully fledged open society which may or may not emerge in Russia. Founded in 1989, the museum set out to repair the disconnection between the patrons' fresh sense of freedom (corresponding, in the younger group of visitors, to the sense of their newly emerging selfhood) and the nation's unalleviated feeling of victimization grounded in successive governments' refusal to acknowledge the traumatic course of Soviet history. According to Popova's recent interview, she and her colleagues dedicated the first fifteen years of their work to this difficult task:

At first we used to say: '[Our subject is] Akhmatova and the history of the artistic intelligentsia before and after the war'. It was because the people who came to us greatly cherished their memories of their mothers and grandmothers. And many of them remembered that their

⁵⁷ Artemenko, Galina, 'Akhmatova stala zvuchat' eshche ostree', *Novaia gazeta*, 23 January 2017, <http://novayagazeta.spb.ru/articles/10774/> (accessed 2 April 2017).

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grandmother, when evacuating the city, would bring along a sewing machine and a volume of Akhmatova. And they needed us to explain why she had dragged that book with her (they did understand what the sewing machine was for). Thus our goal was to bring up all these hidden allusions – to explain what exactly [Akhmatova] had been telling them.⁵⁸

Popova obviously takes pride in the museum's accomplishments in mediating history through Akhmatova, whose intellectual austerity and lyrical genius in representing the dramatic past may serve for many as a pathway to healing their own traumas. But she is also aware that her museum's mission is gradually changing – partly because of generational shift, and partly, because now, more than ever, a cultural institution's authority rests not only in its ability to express the ambiguity and complexity of history and its willingness to voice political antagonism and social guilt, but also in its readiness to register and repair quickly forming gaps in the very fabric of culture:

This [strategy] worked till the end of the 1990s, because human memory holds three generations well. Now the chronicling of time is different. And the museum's mission is now different. For us today, Akhmatova's poetry is only an impulse, an impetus towards understanding the literary process in general, including that side of it that is addressed to children, to their playful experience [of literature]. Now it is important that they should feel literature in general. In that respect, we are being drawn away from Akhmatova, which, for me personally, is an enormous problem. [...] For me now, the most important thing is

⁵⁸ Blagotvoritel'nyi fond V. Potanina, *Muzeinyi gid: Muzei Anny Akhmatovoi v Fontannom Dome, Sankt-Peterburg*, Moscow, 2013, p. 23.

to preserve, through this process of re-evaluation, the sensation of amplitude of her voice and her word, the understanding of her spiritual resistance to oblivion – the severance of cultural links. [...] This, through our understanding of the ethical norm, is directly connected to modernity.⁵⁹

The Akhmatova Museum's moral mission is thus centered on the imperative to propagate people's direct involvement with literature and, more broadly, cultural production as a way of living consciously, being creative, and thinking critically. An explication of this idea can be found in a pamphlet published for the opening of the museum's 2003-2013 permanent exhibition. The booklet indicates that the memorial space and other exhibits at Fountain House (56 Liteinyi Prospekt) are dedicated not to Akhmatova alone, but 'to the representatives of Akhmatova's generation who tried to preserve their world and their personalities in the conditions of a totalitarian state'.⁶⁰ The curators' subject choice – to focus on a generation rather than an individual – informs their understanding of who their addressee is. They respect the wishes of different types of visitors, from the kind who arrive in Akhmatova's memorial apartment to venerate the poet's personal space, to those who come to the museum to interact with their peers, listen to poetry written just yesterday, collaborate with other artists and designers on a contemporary installation, attend a theater production with their children, or watch films about Joseph Brodsky in a room filled with his posters and books.⁶¹ It is not accidental that Vladimir Potanin's Charity Foundation, which recent-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kopylov, Leonid, Pozdniakova, Tat'iana and Popova, Nina, *'Pod znamenitoi krovlei Fontannogo dvortsa': Putevoditel' po muzeiu Anny Akhmatovoi v Fontannom dome*, St Petersburg: Delta, 2004, p. 5.

⁶¹ Artemenko, 'Akhmatova stala zvuchat' esche ostree', *Novaia gazeta*, 23 January 2017, <http://novayagazeta.spb.ru/articles/10774/> (accessed April 2, 2017).

ly granted the Akhmatova Museum an award for versatility and adaptability,⁶² named the inner park of the Sheremet'ev Palace, growing under the windows of Akhmatova's apartment, one of the key items in the museum's collection.⁶³ There is no better emblem of the forum-like, open nature of that museum than a grove of age-old trees. It shades a monument to Praskovia Zhemchugova, the short-lived wife of Count Nikolai Sheremet'ev, one of the former owners of the palace, and harbours retrospectives of young St. Petersburg artists, photographers, and sculptors.

A remarkable location is a point of pride for many museums, but the Akhmatova curators celebrate not so much the historic significance of their museum site as the openness to the dialogue with history that it invites. They credit their heroine for the philosophy of the museum's exhibition approach and the logic of its space design. Everything needs to be seen *sub specie aeternitatis* ('under the aspect of eternity'), in accordance with Akhmatova's creed, 'Ia pomniu vse v odno i to zhe vremia' ('I remember everything simultaneously').⁶⁴ The poet makes this statement in 'Tvorchestvo' ('Creation', 1959), a poem of eight lines in which she compares the universe to her 'easy burden', the one she carries 'in an outstretched palm'.⁶⁵ Just as she believes that 'in the depth, mysteriously growing, is the seed / of what is to come...',⁶⁶ so do the creators trust the infinite possibilities of re-contextualization inherent in the Shere-

⁶² The Akhmatova museum received the award 'Meniaiushchiisia muzei v meniaiushchemsia mire' in 2013, after competing with dozens of other museums in Russia, most of them not literary. Information about the competition and its winners is posted on the Potanin Foundation's website: <http://museum.fondpotanin.ru/diaries/year/104/> (accessed 15 January 2017).

⁶³ Blagotvoritel'nyi fond V. Potanina, *Muzeinyi gid*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Akhmatova, *Complete Poems*, p. 721; Kopylov, Pozdniakova and Popova, 'Pod znamenitoi krovlei Fontannogo dvortsa', p. 5.

⁶⁵ Akhmatova, *Complete Poems*, p. 721.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

met'ev palace and its vicinity. 'The city that surrounds the museum from the Liteinyi Prospekt side is saturated to the brink with historical memory', they state in the brochure dedicated to the museum's fifteenth anniversary.⁶⁷ The same kind of memory – disturbing, painful, tragic, but also thirst-quenching, gratifying, and inspiring – is intrinsic to the museum's palatial side, the site of the former glory of the Sheremet'ev family which, in Akhmatova's time, was first abandoned, then ravaged, and, finally, transformed into The Institute of the Arctic and Antarctic – an establishment subject to heightened security. By placing Soviet-era documents, such as the entrance permits Akhmatova and her husband Nikolai Punin needed in order to enter their apartment through the Institute's guard-post, side-by-side with exquisite remnants of the Silver Age, such as Olga Glebova-Sudeikina's hand-crafted, lace-clad dolls; by blending pre-revolutionary bohemian aesthetics with the wasteland-like style of a communal apartment, and, finally, by reconstructing the 'White Hall' from *Poema bez geroia* (*Poem Without a Hero*) and turning it into a nucleus of its literary narrative, the museum invites its visitors to cross from one side to the other multiple times, while carrying Akhmatova's 'easy burden' in their minds – or hearts.

Akhmatova believed the Sheremet'ev palace to be her true home, the place most congenial to her life, poetics, and metaphysics. Listing her addresses for a future biographer, she paused to record that in 'the Sher[emet'ev's] Fountain House' she lived for '35 y[ears], not counting short departures'.⁶⁸ In 'Otvét Rannitu' ('An Answer to Rannit'), a reply to a query from Alexis Rannit, an Estonian scholar, she named the architecture of the palace – and architecture in general – among her four main poetic influences, the other three being the sea, the earth, and music.⁶⁹ Along with the Mar-

⁶⁷ Kopylov, Pozdniakova and Popova, 'Pod znamenitoi krovlei Fontannogo dvortsa', p. 7.

⁶⁸ Akhmatova, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 224.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

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ble Palace, where she also resided for a short time, the Fountain House was for Akhmatova a link not as much to Russia's imperial past, but to the past devoid of its sophisticated physicality and material riches. This is why, reminiscing about the palaces, the poet recalled her 'first hunger', her 'poverty', linking the memory of her remarkable dwellings to 'the destitute life in them'.⁷⁰

She allowed herself to bask in the luxurious light of the Sheremet'ev's palace's glorious antiquity only in *Poema bez geroia*, where her lyrical heroine catches reflections in gilded mirrors and glides across shiny parquet floors to receive guests from the past and the future and thus transcend time. But even as a setting for Akhmatova's most elaborate narrative of historic border-crossing, the Fountain House remains a reminder of its inhabitant's chronological omnipresence, rather of her being caught in one fixable moment:

Under the roof of the Fountain House
Where the evening languor wandered
With a lantern and a bunch of keys –
I called out to a distant echo,
Stirring, with my inappropriate laughter,
The deep sleep of things, where,
A witness to everything in the world,
From dusk to dawn,
The old maple looks into the room,
And, foreseeing our separation,
Stretches out to me, as if for help,
Its desiccated black hand.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid., 246-247..

⁷¹ Akhmatova, *Complete Poems*, pp. 576-577.

For the Akhmatova Museum curators, to reconstruct the White Hall of the Sheremet'ev Palace in the room dedicated to their heroine's literary connections, intellectual friendships, and romantic liaisons, meant making a theatrical, rather than a preservationist gesture. Just like her old maple tree, Akhmatova claimed to be 'a witness to everything in the world'. She quoted the Latin phrase 'Deus conservat omnia' ('God preserves everything'), 'motto on the coat of arms of the Fountain House', as in one of the epigraphs of *Poema bez geroia*, and carefully retained among her things a decorative laurel wreath, carved of wood, then painted and gilded, which the new palace residents disdainfully tore from the wall.⁷² Placed in the White Hall among such objects as the masquerade masks of the Silver Age and Akhmatova's Oxford gown, this wreath, with its marks of wear and abrasion, emblematises both the poet's immersion in history and her awareness of history's dramatic suspension. It is the symbol of St. Petersburg's connection and indebtedness to Western culture, from which people of Akhmatova's generation and artistic sensibility were being forcefully isolated, and of the poet's mindfulness of the breach.

The concept of 'historic memory' that the Akhmatova Museum's curators refer to in their pamphlet is linked to Akhmatova's idea of memory as an impetus rather than an outcome of the poet's biography. In her Notebooks, in 'Pro domo sua', in the drafts of an uncompleted autobiography ('Moi polveka' ('My Half-Century')), Akhmatova kept insisting on the irretrievability of her past, since most places she lived in or visited in her youth were no longer there:

People of my generation are in no danger of a melancholy return – we have nowhere to return to... Sometimes I think that one can take a cab and go back to the opening days of the Pavlovsk Railroad Station

⁷² Kopylov, Pozdniakova and Popova, 'Pod znamenitoi krovlei Fontannogo dvortsa', p. 39.

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(when it is so desolate and fragrant in the parks) to visit the sites where the inconsolable shade looks for me, but then I begin to understand that this is impossible, that one should not barge (especially in a gasoline-smelling tin can) into the memory's palatial lodgings, that I won't see anything and will only erase this – what I see so clearly now.⁷³

The curators respect this sensibility by attempting to recreate 'memory's palatial lodgings' within the visitors' imagination rather than in the rooms, hallways, and staircases of the museum building. The space lends itself to such an approach. In spite of Akhmatova's calling her place of residence a 'palace', the apartment she shared with Nikolai Punin and his family was communal. Located in one of the outbuildings of the Fountain House, it was accessible through a narrow staircase, overcrowded, and often noisy – a constant reminder of the disconnection between the past one could 'barge into' in memory only, and the present, with its constant, painfully physical violation of personal space. To get to the poet's room, a visitor needs to enter Apartment 44 through a door marked with Punin's name, to the right of which, high above the floor, is a tiny window. According to the museum guide, Punin's daughter and granddaughter were often asked to climb on the edge of the tub in the bathroom and look out of this little opening to ascertain that the people who rang the doorbell outside were not there to arrest or search the people within.⁷⁴ What follows the entrance is similarly unsettling: a long hallway painted green, with boxes and chests, suitcases and baskets crowding every nook and corner, a kitchen with a meager selection of utensils and appliances, a succession of rooms that bear traces of other families' pres-

⁷³ Akhmatova, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 170. The translation of this excerpt from Akhmatova's 'Pro domo sua' is mine – OV. The line from 'Requiem' ('where the inconsolable shade looks for me'), Akhmatova cites in her memoir, is translated by Judith Hemschemeyer (Akhmatova, *Complete Poems*, p. 393).

⁷⁴ Kopylov, Pozdniakova and Popova, 'Pod znamenitoi krovlei Fontannogo dvortsa', p. 15.

ence in Akhmatova's life (the Punins, the Arenses, the Smirnovs).⁷⁵ By the time visitors reach the poet's room, they will have to forcefully withdraw themselves from the world ridden with fear and shaped by communal closeness into the lyrical realm that Akhmatova carved out of that chaos. The effort is worth the reward: after all, they have not come to 'arrest' or 'search' the poet, but rather, to conjure up her presence in the memory of culture.

The Akhmatova Museum's experimentation with memorial space and its cutting-edge documentary exhibitions continue in spite of the controversy this approach provokes. Its visitors' books reflect a broad range of impressions, from laudatory ('Thank you for the Memory! Nowhere in the world is poetry appreciated as highly as it is in Russia – here it costs one's life!') to negative.⁷⁶ Not every patron is willing to accept the museum's philosophy, and even when agreeing that the museum is 'great to have,' she or he may complain: 'But where is love, where is the soul in our tour guide's presentation of the material?' The visitor may lament the exhibition's 'dryness' and 'lack of chronological order'.⁷⁷ And yet, when asked about the discrepancy in the two responses, Popova refuses to consider the accusations of laconicism a serious impediment to the museum's relationship with its audience: 'Museum language quickly

⁷⁵ Nikolai Punin's first wife, Anna Evgen'evna Arens-Punina and her daughter Irina remained in the apartment when Akhmatova joined the household around 1923. Anna Bogdanovna Smirnova was the Punins' domestic servant who moved in with them in 1924. A year later, Smirnova's son Evgenii Fedorovich also moved in. He and his wife Tat'iana Ivanovna often made the life of the old residents nearly impossible: Popova, N.I. and Rubinchik, O.E., 'Anna Akhmatova i Fontannyi Dom', http://www.akhmatova.org/bio/fd_2.htm (accessed 18 January 2017).

⁷⁶ *Kniga posetitelei*, Arkhiv Muzeia Anny Akhmatovoi v Fontannom Dome, 1989 (unpublished), p. 16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26. A similar discrepancy may be found in the most recent online comments that visitors leave on the Akhmatova Museum's tripadvisor.ru webpage: https://www.tripadvisor.ru/Attraction_Review-g298507-d565714-Reviews-Anna_Akhmatova_Museum_at_Fountain_House_Fontanny_Dom-St_Petersburg_Northwestern_Di.html (accessed 30 March 2017).

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becomes obsolete, if it does not get rejuvenated through a dialogue. This *is* the dialogue. We will continue with it'.⁷⁸

Both of the visitor's comments quoted above date back to the museum's early days, the time when it still partly adhered to traditional design principles, showcasing manuscripts and letters in separate glass cases and propelling the viewers along the path of the poet's biography, from Akhmatova's first days in Tsarskoe Selo to her gatherings with young poet-disciples at the 'Budka' at Komarovo. The new permanent exhibition, which opened in May 2015, is significantly more conceptual than the previous two. It features not Akhmatova's biography, but her idea about poets' ability to connect and compare various historical layers, to 'hear' history through the noise of the present. In addition to re-designing the cases and vitrines for showcasing the archive and memorabilia, the museum has literally added voices from the past to their exhibit. While walking through the communal apartment, patrons are randomly exposed to party leaders' speeches on the radio, the screeching of the tram car on Liteinyi Prospekt, an argument in a communal kitchen, and snatches of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony. Every object on display now requires visitors to linger, meditate, and make connections between images, concepts, and dates relevant to Akhmatova's life and their personal associations with the historic residue.

It seems likely that the visitors who grumbled in 1989 may find it difficult to acquiesce to the newer version of the Akhmatova museum's permanent exhibition. Nevertheless, they still return – some for curiosity's sake, and others because they enjoy being involved in such projects as interactive theatrical performances, Christmas celebrations, and presentations of new books. According to the museum's public relations director Anna Sokolova, visitors admit that, for them, 'it is interesting and im-

⁷⁸ Personal interview with Nina Popova, 8 July 2013.

portant to spend time' at the memorial home and with guests and its curators.⁷⁹ This statement proves that an innovative literary museum goes beyond merely catering to its own group of patrons, the people who have already absorbed and even appropriated the commemorated writer's political, philosophical, and aesthetic outlook. It also forms its audience by surprising its devotees and by giving first-comers a chance to get more closely engaged with the author. This is done by expanding first-time visitors' view of the era relevant to their understanding of the writer, by estranging the familiar and articulating the unknown, and by stimulating a viewer's personal reaction to parts of the exhibition or to the museum visit in general.

Learning through Interaction: The Joseph Brodsky Museum

In recent years, researchers have accumulated data and garnered analysis that explains why for the contemporary, techno-savvy audience, learning from the literary museum means learning, first and foremost, about self. Thus, John Falk has discovered that successful museums offer their audiences fulfillment, defined as an effective search for personal identity, while Clay Shirky has outlined, among the key factors of a participatory mechanism that works, 'a plausible promise, an effective tool, and an acceptable bargain' with those who come to visit.⁸⁰ The latter refers to outcomes of the museum experience that correspond to the museum-goer's personal goals, patterns of self-perception, and modes of interaction with reality. In other words, museum-goers feel their happiest when they are invited to construct the narrative about a work of literature and thus co-create the content of the exhibit on the level that is most relevant

⁷⁹ Artemenko, 'Akhmatova stala zvuchat' eshche ostree'.

⁸⁰ Falk, John, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2009; Shirky, Clay, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*, New York: Penguin, 2008; cited in Simon, *Participatory Museum*, pp. 18-19.

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to them. This kind of participation elevates visitors to the level of the institution's 'partners' and even 'co-owners'.⁸¹

Bak, Loshak, Popova, and other innovative museum curators are obviously familiar with their audiences' demand for an of immersion in the documentary material, as well as with their expectation of visual, auditory, and tactile forms of stimulation. But their awareness and efforts notwithstanding, a participatory literary memorial is still a rare phenomenon in Russia. In spite of the many exhibitions already equipped with speakerphones and touch screens, very few literary museums actually involve their patrons in creating a narrative about the writers' life – and their own experience with the author and his/her books. Now a subsidiary of the Anna Akhmatova Museum, the evolving Joseph Brodsky memorial apartment in St. Petersburg is possibly Russia's first museum project of this kind.

The Brodsky Museum is to be located in the communal flat where the poet's family lived between 1955 (the year when their names appeared in the book of residence permit registrations of the municipal housing committee office) and 1983-84, the years of Brodsky's parents' deaths. Located at 24 Liteinyi Prospekt, the apartment is part of the sprawling and ornate Muruzi House, built in 1874-1877 by a wealthy Greek family. Famous not only for its Moorish-style décor, but also for the illustrious list of its inhabitants, the house had become a symbolic point on the St. Petersburg literary map long before Brodsky, a forced exile, moved out in 1972 (and even before he moved in). Nikolai Leskov lived there briefly, Aleksandr Kuprin visited, while the apartment of Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Zinaida Gippius became the centre of the St. Petersburg Symbolist movement and thus 'a connecting link between late-nineteenth-century salons ("Fridays" at Sluchevskii's, "Wednesdays" at Polonskii's) and such centres of "Silver Age" culture as Viacheslav Ivanov's "Tower", "evenings" at Fedor

⁸¹ Simon, *Participatory Museum*, p. 21.

Sologub's, and "Wednesdays" at Baron Drizen's'.⁸² Thus, the corner of a five-room enfilade that Brodsky, his mother and his father occupied,⁸³ was part a legendary space. And yet, reminiscing about his 'room and a half' in an eponymous essay, the poet celebrated his connection not as much to the city's 'architectural sensation' or cultural history, as to its reluctantly acquired routine of Soviet co-habitation and the possibilities of enlightenment it allowed. Communal life, Brodsky wrote, 'bares life to its basics: it strips off any illusions about human nature'.⁸⁴ To retain at least some belief in humanity, he attempted to 'barricade' himself from others, his parents included, with bookshelves and books, which, in turn, led to the creation of a personal space that Brodsky later internalised and refined, making sensitivity to an individual's plight and intellectual solitude his key aesthetic principles.⁸⁵

⁸² Kobak, A. and Lur'e, L., *Peterburg ves' na ladoni: biografiia odnogo doma: Dom Muruzi*, Leningrad: Tovariščestvo 'Svecha', 1990, p. 23.

⁸³ The number of rooms in Brodsky's former apartments is somewhat of a mystery. Currently, The Foundation for the Creation of the Brodsky Museum speaks of five rooms, four of which have already been purchased for the museum purposes (Plotnikova, Anna, 'Budet li v Peterburge sozdan muzei Brodskogo?' *Golos Ameriki*, 23 May 2012, <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/museum-iosif-brodsky/940205.html> (accessed 31 January 2017). The poet himself, however, wrote of six rooms: 'Apart from an excess of thirteen square meters, we were terribly lucky because the communal apartment we had moved into was very small. That is, the part of the enfilade that constituted it contained six rooms partitioned in such a way that they gave a home to only four families. Including ourselves, only eleven people lived there' (Brodsky, Joseph, *Less than One: Selected Essays*, New York, 1986, p. 449). It is likely that some of the temporary partitions that divided bigger rooms into more inhabitable spaces were removed as living conditions gradually improved.

⁸⁴ Brodsky, *Less than One*, p. 454.

⁸⁵ Brodsky emphasizes this point in his Nobel lecture ('Uncommon Visage'): 'If art teaches anything (to the artist, in the first place), it is the privateness of the human condition. Being the most ancient as well as the most literal form of private enterprise, it fosters in a man, knowingly or unwittingly, a sense of his uniqueness, of individuality, of separateness - thus turning him from a social animal into an autonomous "I"' (Brodsky, Joseph, *On Grief and Reason: Selected Essays*, New York, 1995, p. 46).

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Paradoxically, the current conceptual outline of the Brodsky Museum proclaims the transformation of the poet's adolescent individualism into an ability to appropriate the best of world culture as his only true legacy. The museum's founders intend to commemorate the poet's inclusion in the literary culture of the 1960-1990s, and, more broadly, his serving as a 'bridge' between contemporary Russian literature and 'the world literary process' rather than his heightened, manifest independence.⁸⁶ In a similar anti-individualistic vein, the museum has been a group project from the day of its conception. Its idea belongs to several Russian, European, and American writers, musicians, and curators, such as Dmitrii Likhachev, Daniil Granin, Mikhail Piotrovskii, Galina Vishnevskaiia, Mstislav Rostropovich, Andrei Petrov, Czesław Miłosz and Wisława Szymborska, who proposed it in a letter to Vladimir Iakovlev, then governor of St. Petersburg.⁸⁷ The governor approved the undertaking, but it took eight years and repeated appeals from 'The Public Foundation for the Creation of the Brodsky Museum', headed by the poet's friend, art historian, and conservationist Mikhail Mil'chik, for the city to come up with an official response. Only in 2006, did the Municipal Culture Committee assign the job of turning the 'room and a half' into a full-fledged Brodsky memorial to the Akhmatova Museum and its curators.

In spite of the lofty rhetoric accompanying the campaign, the Brodsky Museum still remains unestablished. One of the main obstacles to its foundation is the communal nature of the poet's apartment, which resists privatization. Mil'chik, who is adamant that the Muruzi house should be its principal venue, believes that the delay is due to the lack of interference from the municipal authorities. In an interview with *The Voice of America*, he said that the city government 'has always supported us in

⁸⁶ Sankt-Peterburgskii fond sozdaniia muzeia Iosifa Brodskogo, 'Proekt muzeia', 2013, <http://brodskymuseum.com/museum/project/> (accessed 22 January 2017).

⁸⁷ Ibid., 'Obrashchenie', 2013, <http://brodskymuseum.com/fund/appeal/> (accessed 23 January 2017).

words but showed indifference [to the project] in essence'.⁸⁸ According to Mil'chik, even Brodsky's symbolic role in strengthening Russian-American cultural connections does not significantly alter the authorities' non-committal attitude:

I do not hope that the administration will help us in a practical way. Apparently, they do not care about such things. They are interested in talking about [St.Petersburg as] a cultural capital, [they] comment on the cultural connections to the United States. After all, Brodsky embodies bridges between the two cultures. But, alas, the authorities have taken no practical steps.⁸⁹

Getting little support and facing the viciousness of real estate battles – territoriality being one of the more disheartening aspects of human nature, in accordance with Brodsky's testimony 'In a Room and a Half',⁹⁰ – the Foundation had to undertake the job of raising private funds to purchase the apartment room by room. It has acquired powerful friends and wealthy sponsors, such as the Alpha-Bank, the oil company TNK-BP (now part of Rosneft'), and the real estate agency Adveks. Their efforts have led to the purchase of four rooms out of five and to raising enough funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the privatized space.⁹¹ There is one room of 484 square feet, however, whose owner, an older lady, refuses to move out for less than seventeen million rubles (approximately \$485,000). To collect this amount, the Foun-

⁸⁸ Plotnikova, 'Budet li v Peterburge sozdan muzei Brodskogo?'

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Brodsky's 'In a Room and a Half' gives a concise and piercing portrayal of life in a communal apartment, with all 'despicable aspects of this mode of existence', from one's neighbors 'hygienic habits' to their willingness to inform on residents to the secret police (Brodsky, *Less than One*, p. 454).

⁹¹ Sankt-Peterburgskii fond, 'Obrashchenie'.

dation has issued an appeal ‘to everyone in Russia and beyond its borders who believe that the museum needs to be created’ and begun to put together a variety of public events, including concerts and poetry readings, to increase the museum project’s visibility and to solicit help from ‘common citizens’, rather than administrators. The appeal states that if four hundred and fifty people – ‘every tenth person living in St. Petersburg’ – would contribute 50 rubles (\$0.90) to the museum, the institution would meet its fundraising goals and thus secure the rights to the memorial space.⁹²

The most unusual part of this campaign, apart from the tenacity of the apartment’s co-owner, is its appeal to young Petersburgers. Theatre director, songwriter, and restorer Pavel Mikhailov, who manages the Foundation’s ‘Youth Initiative’, finds contemporary information outreach, including his communication with supporters via the social media site *V kontakte*, the most efficient way of connecting like-minded people and organizing their efforts. For Mikhailov, the Brodsky Museum is not entirely devoid of altar-like characteristics, but it is the unifying, community-building properties of the memorial space that he appreciates the most. In an emotional appeal to those who read and love Brodsky’s poetry posted on *V kontakte* on September 24, 2013, he used plain, intentionally non-didactic language, being aware of his audience’s revulsion to proselytisation:

The matter is simple: a poet lived, then he became world-famous. Those who know him are proud of him, read his poetry, there are many such people. He received the Nobel Prize, did a lot for other people, enriched an enormous cultural space with his ideas, developed a new narrative device [sic], became a classic in his life-time. So this thought comes to mind: he has done so much for us, what can we do for him?

⁹² Ibid.

How can we pay the tribute of love to one who has already died, leaving behind a great poetic and cultural heritage? Answers appear on their own: a collected works, teaching in schools, a monument, a museum, commemorating individually and much more, all that personal stuff. But we should not forget that Brodsky was a human being, like all of us. And it seems to me that it would be normal to open a museum dedicated to such a great poet. There is nothing concealed or bad in this thought, this desire. It is an objectively clear and kindly act, the impulse coming from one's love for the creative work of one specific person.⁹³

Unlike some formal fundraising documents, Mikhailov's text appeals to his (and Brodsky's) readers' sense of shared love and shared duty. It downplays Brodsky's connection to Western culture – a fact that the Akhmatova Museum curators put forward in their conceptual outline of the future museum – and instead points out the 'normalcy' of setting up a memorial to a poet who was generous to all with his ideas ('[...] he has done so much for us, what can we do for him?'). It is important to point out that, because Mikhailov circulated his appeal on *V kontakte*, Russia's biggest social network to date, his implied addressee – 'us' – may be seen either as a list of his online 'friends', a more or less limited group, or as a confederacy of all Russian internet users (all of them are potentially exposed to information circulated electronically). In any case, Mikhailov sees his audience as real people who are willing to strike a 'bargain' with the new memorial institution that would lead to a fair exchange of their energy and resources for a life-long share in the city's new cultural memory project. He knows that these young men and women – his peers – would not be satisfied with

⁹³ Mikhailov, Pavel, 'Vmesto obrashcheniia: fond sozdaniia muzeia Iosifa Brodskogo', *V kontakte*, 24 September 2013, <http://vk.com/brodskymuseum> (accessed 30 January 2016).

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the archaic Soviet literary museum model which limited patrons' interaction with a memorial space and dictated how to interpret the museum-going experience. Neither would they agree to become the sort of visitors who, according to Geichenko's dictum, are willing to perceive the poet's presence in the compendium of old objects or 'eternally present' rocks and trees. For them, the memorial space is a space they carve out themselves.

One may argue that Mikhailov's rhetoric is so simplistic that it borders on the ridiculous: do people who have to be spoken to as children need a museum dedicated to one of Russia's most cerebral poets? Another argument against the Foundation's campaign is of a more practical nature: Why establish a Brodsky Museum at the Muruzi House since there is already a 'Brodsky Room' at Fountain House? (It contains furniture, books, and posters brought over from South Hadley, Massachusetts, where Brodsky lived when teaching at Mount Holyoke College from 1974 to 1996, as well as memorial objects from the Akhmatova Museum's collection.⁹⁴) Moreover, Mil'chik is currently working on restoring the house in the village of Norinskaia where Brodsky spent nineteen months in exile in 1964-1965.⁹⁵ That humble, rapidly dilapidating hut has already been purchased from its former owners and is now being transformed into a 'cultural and educational centre', where, according to Mil'chik, 'poets from all regions of Russia and from other countries could gather'.⁹⁶ Perhaps the memorial in the Archangel'sk Region and the poet's study ('Kabinet Brodskogo') transported from South Hadley, could jointly form the relevant 'room and a half' of a museum space?

⁹⁴ Artemenko, 'Akhmatova stala zvuchat' eshche ostree'.

⁹⁵ 'Muzei Brodskogo v Pomor'e stanet pervym muzeem poeta v mire', Informatsionnoe agentstvo Dvina Inform, 30 October 2013', <http://www.dvinainform.ru/culture/2013/10/30/18802.html> (accessed 31 January 2017).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

There are several possible answers to these questions, one of them provided by Aleksei Grinbaum, scholar, translator, and representative of the Brodsky Estate in Russia. He believes that the St. Petersburg museum will open its doors at the Muruzi House sooner or later, but that it will be a 'different kind of place'.⁹⁷ Recalling how the Brodsky Estate sent the poet's books to St. Petersburg so that people could have open access to them and how the same books ended up on a shelf in the Akhmatova Museum, behind a conservationist's seal, Grinbaum anticipates a museum that would be more active when unencumbered with a great collection. For him, the Brodsky Museum will be 'a rather empty space: what kind of stuff do you imagine there?'⁹⁸ But Grinbaum also believes that Mikhailov's followers will come to the unfurnished, bare apartment exactly because it will be unfurnished and bare. 'The [curators] will have to work not with objects, but with readers, with those young people who are interested in poetry. To organize readings, performances of poet-singers and other public programs. They will have to orient themselves towards such cultural centres as "Etazh" and "Taiga", and towards public urban projects, such as "Open Space"'.

It is likely that Grinbaum is right and that the Brodsky Museum, funded with donations from Russian businesses and St. Petersburg citizens, will be different. When turned into a museum, the apartment will not be entirely empty: the collection will trickle in, partly coming from the Akhmatova Museum's reserves and partly, from the poet's friends who will donate objects in his memory. But what will also happen is the re-possession of the memorial space by its new 'owners'. The audience who has contributed to the foundation of the Brodsky memorial apartment will come to claim the space not only as Brodsky's, but also as their own. And even if they do not want to worship the museum space and the poet's presence in it, they will be there

⁹⁷ Personal interview with Aleksei Grinbaum 11 July 2013.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

to venerate their own togetherness in the name of poetry and, more broadly, Russian culture's capacity for survival and self-rejuvenation.

Conclusion

On 25 May 2015, the Brodsky Museum opened its doors for one day, to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the poet's birth.⁹⁹ It featured bare rooms decorated with a few portraits, an installation consisting of 1950-1970s photographs soaking in a tub to imitate an amateur photographer's studio, and the communal kitchen filled with factory-issue busts of workers and athlete girls – the symbolic representations of common Soviet men and women whose lives unfolded side by side with Brodsky's. The neighbor who refused to move out allowed her quarters to be walled off from the museum's side. A few repairs had been made, but the floors remained covered in patched linoleum, while residues of old, dirty whitewash still lingered on the walls. Although Mil'chik did not sound too happy, telling the journalists that this was 'something of an opening of something like a museum',¹⁰⁰ Popova approved of the memorial's temporary version, calling the preservation of its 'texture of communal horror, of poverty' the right kind of curatorial gesture.¹⁰¹ The most significant validation of the new museum, however, came from citizens of St. Petersburg. On that blustery day, thousands of people stood in line for up to five hours to see the poet's home and hear his voice coming from loudspeakers. Many of them helped to establish the museum or contributed funds to it.

⁹⁹ 'Muzei-kvartira Brodskogo otkrylas' v Peterburge na odin den' k semidesiatipiatiletiiu poeta', TASS, 24 May 2015, <http://tass.ru/kultura/1989423> (accessed 2 April 2017).

¹⁰⁰ 'Muzei v "Polutora komnatakh" Brodskogo kak by otkryvaetsia', 22 May 2015, http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2015/05/150522_brodsky_75_anno_spb_museum_opening (accessed 3 April, 2017).

¹⁰¹ 'Muzei-kvartira Brodskogo otkrylas' v Peterburge na odin den'.

The example of this museum-project-in-progress elucidates the rule that Russian literary commemorations of the innovative type attempt to follow: to be a forum, a museum needs to give its audience a chance to join the curators in defining the scope, purpose, and meaning of the memorial space. The literary museums' role no longer lies merely in translating national canonisation practices or an author's perception of history into narratives that may or may not be accessible to their patrons. Capable of inviting audiences to co-create content through constructing personalized narratives about their literary experiences, Russian literary museums may become vehicles for the patrons' direct involvement in collective memory projects. Post-Soviet cultural history is now in the making, and there is a chance that literary memorials will be in the vanguard of its formation. Will they freeze in time or evolve? What kind of heritage will they continue to propagate – tangible or intangible, the material residue of the past or ideas? Who will set their agendas? Who will continue to visit and participate? When poets think of posterity, they imagine a monument, not a museum. But it is the museum's non-monumentality that makes it attractive to lovers of literature: the human touch that warms the marble.

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**JOSEPH BRODSKY'S 'DECEMBER IN FLORENCE': RE-INTERPRETING EXILE
WITH THE SHADOW OF DANTE**

Up until roughly a century ago, Dante and Shakespeare used to be generally accepted, alongside the inevitable poets of classical antiquity, as the two major reference points for any Western European poet. As suggested by Harold Bloom in 1994, this is no longer the case with modern writers: 'Contemporary writers do not like to be told that they must compete with Shakespeare and Dante'.¹ And yet, at least one writer still regarded tradition in 1992 to be part and parcel of his *métier*. In his talk dedicated to Marina Tsvetaeva's centenary read at Amherst College, Joseph Brodsky said:

Подлинный поэт не бежит влияний и преемственности, но зачастую лелеет их и всячески подчеркивает. Нет ничего физически (физиологически даже) более отрадного, чем повторять про себя или вслух чьи-либо строки. Боязнь влияния, боязнь зависимости – это боязнь – и болезнь – дикаря, но не культуры, которая вся – преемственность, вся – эхо. Пусть кто-нибудь передаст это господину Харольду Блуму.²

A real poet does not flee from influences and continuity, but, on the contrary, often worships and stresses them in every possible way. There is nothing physically (even physiologically) more rewarding

¹ Bloom, Harold, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994, p. 7.

² Brodsky, Joseph, 'Primechanie k Kommentariu' (1992), *Sochineniia Iosifa Brodskogo*, vol. 7, St Petersburg: Pushkinskii Fond, 2001, p. 180.

than repeating aloud or just to yourself somebody else's lines. Anxiety of influence, anxiety of dependence is more peculiar to a savage than to a cultured man; for culture is all about continuity, about an echo. Someone should pass this on to Mr Harold Bloom.

Despite their apparent will to disagree with each other, both Brodsky and Bloom are actually saying essentially the same thing, i.e. that in order to write well, a modern poet must know his or her predecessors in the Western literary canon well. Indeed, not only did Brodsky firmly believe in the importance of tradition for modern poets, but he was also always quite anxious to acknowledge his debts to the poets of the past himself and to express his admiration for the works that had had influence on him. A good example is the poem 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' ('December in Florence'), which Brodsky wrote in 1976 and in which he pays homage to and enters into direct dialogue with Dante Alighieri.

'To Continue What ... Was Supposed to be Interrupted': Brodsky and the Western Tradition in Russian Literature

When Brodsky was starting to write poetry in Leningrad in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he was operating in what appeared to be a fairly barren environment. In the aftermath of the 'Ezhovshchina', the whole-scale extermination of the Russian intelligentsia in 1937,³ Russian culture in the 1940s and the early 1950s constituted a wasteland.⁴ These were the years when Russia was extremely isolated, physically and psy-

³ Ignatieff, Michael, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 136.

⁴ Sir Isaiah Berlin, who visited the country in 1945, described its cultural scene in similar terms: 'The great purges... altered the literary and artistic scene beyond all recognition. The number of writers and artists exiled or exterminated during this time [...] was such that Russian literature and thought emerged in 1939 like an area

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chologically, from the cultural currents of the rest of the world. Moreover, these years had been preceded by the extermination of many of the country's best writers, readers, and scholars during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and the early 1950s.⁵ As a poet living in a post-Stalinist Russia, Brodsky, born in 1940, wished to re-establish a cultural continuity with the two preceding generations of Russian writers. Those writers had lived in a Russia that still conceived of itself as part of Europe. This quest became the pervading *leitmotiv* of his entire oeuvre, as Brodsky emphasized in his Nobel Lecture:

'How can one write music after Auschwitz?' inquired Adorno; and one familiar with Russian history can repeat the same question by merely changing the name of the camp – and repeat it perhaps with even greater justification, since the number of people who perished in Stalin's camps far surpasses the number of German prison-camp victims. 'And how can you eat lunch?' the American poet Mark Strand once retorted. In any case, the generation to which I belong has proven capable of writing that poetry. [...] That generation – the generation born precisely at the time when the Auschwitz crematoria were working full blast, when Stalin was at the zenith of his Godlike, absolute power, which seemed sponsored by Mother Nature herself – *that generation*

devastated by war': quoted from Berlin, Isaiah, 'Arts in Russia Under Stalin', *The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture Under Communism*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, p. 6.

⁵ 'In addition to the millions of ordinary people sent to labour camps or simply shot, the regime had exterminated the cultural élite, including the poet Osip Mandelstam, the brilliant short story writer Isaac Babel, the theater director Meyerhold, the critic D.S. Mirsky and numberless others. By the time the killing and deportation were done, there was a vacant stillness in Russian culture, like a forest after an all-consuming fire': quoted from Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, pp. 136-137. See also Mandelstam, Nadezhda, *Hope against Hope. A Memoir*, trans. Max Hayward, New York: Atheneum, 1970; and Mandelstam, Nadezhda, *Hope abandoned*, trans. Max Hayward, New York: Atheneum, 1974.

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*came into the world, it appears, in order to continue what, theoretically, was supposed to be interrupted in those crematoria and in the anonymous common graves of Stalin's archipelago.*⁶

Brodsky's encounter with the poet Anna Akhmatova in 1961 and their ensuing friendship had proven crucial in establishing the link between two generations that seemed to be irreversibly separated from one another by the force of major historical upheavals.

Akhmatova belonged to the generation of Russians who still spoke foreign languages, had travelled abroad, and had been vitally connected to the currents and influences of Western art. More importantly, in the new, ostensibly 'forgetful', Orwellian environment she retained vivid memories of the old world. Thus Tomas Venclova observes:

Для него Ахматова была живым воплощением петербургской традиции и вообще высокой традиции русской культуры. В моем дневнике записаны его слова, сказанные в 1989 году: 'Была какая-то традиция, идущая от Петра, от Кантемира – она кончилась на людях, которых мы еще застали'. Под 'людьми, которых мы еще застали' подразумевалась Ахматова и ее ближайший круг. Знаком традиции, кстати, было само название Санкт-Петербурга...⁷

For him [Brodsky] Akhmatova was the living embodiment of the Petersburg tradition and in general of the high tradition of the Russian

⁶ Brodsky, Joseph, 'Uncommon Visage: The Noble Lecture', *Less Than One: Essays*, London: Penguin, 1986, p. 55 (italics mine).

⁷ Quoted from Venclova, Tomas, 'Sreten'e: vstrecha v Peterburge', *Stat'i o Brodskom*, Moscow: Baltrus Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2005, p. 138.

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culture. In my diaries I recorded the words that he said in 1989: 'There was a certain stream of tradition coming from Peter I, from Kantemir – and it ended with the people whom we still happened to meet'. By these people Brodsky meant Akhmatova and her immediate circle. The very name Saint Petersburg was the emblem of this tradition, by the way ... (translation mine).

It is believed that Brodsky inherited from Akhmatova his life-long fascination with English literature.⁸ For Brodsky, Akhmatova also provided an intellectual link to her friend, poet Osip Mandelstam, whose first arrest in 1934 she had witnessed first-hand.⁹ In the ominous year of 1937, Stalin's purges had reached their climax. While already in his second exile in the city of Voronezh, Mandelstam was asked about the nature of Acmeism: '– Тоска по мировой культуре' ('Nostalgia for world culture') Mandelstam famously answered.¹⁰ In her own poems, written during the darkest hour of Russian history,¹¹ Akhmatova made a conscious effort to 'preserve European

⁸ Ibid, p. 140: 'Стоит заметить и то, что Ахматова знала английский и больше, чем Цветаева и Мандельштам, интересовалась английской поэзией – "англоязычная" ориентация Бродского, видимо, в определенной мере унаследована от нее' ('It should be pointed out that Akhmatova knew English better than Tsvetaeva and Mandelstam and English poetry interested her – thus, Brodsky inherited his English-language orientation most probably from her').

⁹ 'His [Brodsky's] only physical link to Mandelstam was Akhmatova, who was among the first to recognize his gift and to make the connection between the two Josephs': Bethea, David M., *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 85.

¹⁰ Quoted in Meilakh, Mikhail B. and Toporov, Vladimir N., 'Akhmatova i Dante', *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 15/1972, 59.

¹¹ See also Venclova, 'Sreten'e', p. 137: '...Ахматова отдавала себе отчет в том, что ее опыт не полностью доступен для молодежи, выросшей в несколько более мягкие времена. Хорошо помню последний наш разговор. Было это в конце 1965 года... Тогда она сказала: "Молодое поколение, конечно, уже знает многое, но все-таки не знает и никогда не узнает, из какой грязи и крови все они растут, на какой грязи и

standards of culture against the Soviet tide'.¹² Her major later work *Poema bez georii* (*Poem without a Hero*) brims with allusions to Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Shelley, T.S. Eliot, and so forth. But, if there was ever a poet whom Akhmatova regarded for most of her mature life as a pinnacle of poetic expression – as well as a role model – it was unmistakably Dante Alighieri.

Akhmatova, Mandelstam and the 'Stern Alighieri'

Already in the 1910s, Akhmatova and other poets from the 'Tsekh poetov' (Guild of Poets) such as, for instance, her first husband, the poet Nikolai Gumilev, as well as M.L. Lozinskii, who later completed the canonical Russian translation of the *Divina commedia* (*Divine Comedy*), showed a great interest in Italian poetry and, specifically, in Dante. And yet it was only with her friend and fellow-Acmeist poet Osip Mandelstam that Akhmatova shared a more congenial understanding of and veneration for Dante. Over the decades, both Akhmatova's and Mandelstam's attitude towards Dante underwent a veritable evolution. Both progressed from having a mere interest in the aesthetics of Italian medieval literature to engaging in a profound study of the *Divina commedia* as a central and formative work for the spiritual and cultural values of all European civilization.¹³ Mandelstam spoke of Dante as a genuine 'measure of poetic

крови все это замешано – то, чем мы живем сейчас' ('Akhmatova realized that her experience was not entirely conceivable for the younger generations, who grew up during relatively milder times. I remember well our last conversation. It was at the close of year 1965... when she said to me: "The young generation already knows quite a lot, but does not know it all and will never know on what dirt and blood they are all growing – what blood and dirt our present life was founded upon").

¹² See also Ignatieff, Michael, 'Leningrad 1945', in: *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998, p. 158.

¹³ See also Meilakh and Toporov, 'Akhmatova i Dante', pp. 29-75.

truth', a master and a teacher.¹⁴ His *Razgovor o Dante* (*Conversation about Dante*) represents a unique introduction to the poetics of the Florentine poet. It carves for itself a special space in the vast sea of international Dante criticism alongside such other unconventional and stimulating commentaries of Dante as those by Pound, Eliot and Borges.¹⁵ Akhmatova summed up what Dante stood for, both for herself and Mandelstam, in a speech dedicated to the seventh centenary of Dante's birth 'For my friends and contemporaries the greatest, unattainable teacher was always the stern Alighieri'.¹⁶

From his poetic mentors Akhmatova and Mandelstam Brodsky inherited this enormous reverence for Dante. Thus, he titled his 1977 essay on Eugenio Montale – one of Italy's major 20th century poets – 'In the Shadow of Dante'. In a similar vein, in the note to the first Italian collection of his verse, *La Fermata nel Deserto* (1979), Brodsky remarks upon Dante's place in Italian literature by suggesting that everything that had been written in the Italian language had been written in the shadow of Dante:

É un piacere straordinario per me che i miei versi vengano pubblicati
in una traduzione in italiano, la lingua prima della poesia. Vorrei che
piacessero al lettore italiano, ma se ciò non dovesse accadere, non ne
sarò troppo amareggiato, al pensiero che, in ogni caso, per chiunque

¹⁴ See also Mandelstam, Osip, 'Conversation about Dante', *The Complete Critical Prose and Letters*, trans. Jane Gary Harris and Constance Link, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1979, pp. 397-451.

¹⁵ See also Eliot, T.S., *Dante*, London: Faber & Faber, 1929; Pound, Ezra, *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe*, London: J.M. Dent, 1910; Borges, Jorge Luis, 'The False Problem of Ugolino', in: Mazzotta, Giuseppe (ed.), *Critical Essays on Dante*, Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1991, pp. 175-188.

¹⁶ Akhmatova, Anna, 'A Word about Dante', *My Half Century: Selected Prose*, ed. Ronald Meyer, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1992, p. 267.

abbia preso la penna in mano, non v'è destino migliore che conquistarsi un pezzo d'esistenza all'ombra di Dante.¹⁷

I am extraordinarily pleased that my poems have been translated into Italian, which is the first language of poetry. I would be pleased if Italian readers liked them, but if this should not happen, I am not going to be very embittered about it either, knowing that in any case for anyone who has taken a pen into his hand, *there is not a better fate than to conquer a piece of existence in the shadow of Dante* (translation mine).

It is, therefore, not surprising that upon his first appearance in Florence Brodsky composed a poem in homage to Dante and his *Divina commedia*. It is also not surprising that this poem turns out to be a homage to both Akhmatova and Mandelstam as well.

December in Florence

Brodsky travelled to Florence in January of 1975. It was his first time in the city and one of his first winter vacations in Italy following his expulsion from Soviet Russia and his settling in the US in 1972. As Alexandra Berlina points out, 'Brodsky did go to a museum in Florence, but his Dantesque tour is arguably closer to a pilgrimage

¹⁷ Brodsky, Joseph, 'Nota dell'autore', *Fermata nel deserto*, Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1979, p. 147 (italics mine). Brodsky reiterated the same idea in a postcard written to his New York friend Masha Vorob'eva: 'Приехал сюда всего лишь на 10 дней: чтоб принять участие в популяризации своей книжечки вышедшей тут солидным тиражом. Это ужасно приятно: быть переведенным на итальянский: в некотором роде отплатить Данте его же монетой' ('Came here just for ten days in order to take part in promotion of my collection published here in a substantial edition. It feels very nice to have been translated into Italian: it's like paying Dante in his own coin'); Brodsky, Joseph, 'Postcard from Venice to Masha Vorobiova' (late 1970s), 'Correspondence', Joseph Brodsky Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter BRBL), Yale University

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than to sight-seeing'.¹⁸ Quite naturally, Brodsky draws some parallels between his and Dante's exile. Brodsky's take on the whole issue of exile in this poem, however, is rather unconventional.

Dekabr' vo Florentsii opens with direct allusions to the opening of the *Divina commedia* with its 'wild animals' and 'dark forest':

Двери вдыхают воздух и выдыхают пар; но
ты не вернешься сюда, где, разбившись попарно,
населенье гуляет над обмелевшим Арно,
напоминая новых четвероногих. Двери
хлопают, на мостовую выходят звери.
Что-то *вправду от леса* имеется в атмосфере
этого города.¹⁹

The doors take in air, exhale steam; **you, however, won't**
be back to the shallowed Arno where, *like a new kind*
of quadruped, idle couples follow the river bend.
Doors bang, *beasts hit the slabs*. Indeed,
the atmosphere of this city retains a bit
of the dark forest.²⁰

¹⁸ Berlina, Alexandra, *Brodsky Translating Brodsky: Poetry in Self-Translation*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 30.

¹⁹ All the subsequent citations from 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' in Russian are quoted from *Sochineniia Iosifa Brodskogo*, vol. 3, St Petersburg: Pushkinskii Fond, 1998, pp. 111-113.

²⁰ All the English versions were translated by the author and are quoted from Brodsky, Joseph, *Collected Poems in English, 1972-1996*, ed. Ann Kjellberg, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000, pp. 130-132 (italics and emphasis mine).

Somewhat less conspicuous is the allusion to Dante's *Vita Nuova*, made by the use of the word 'new', in the fourth line of the first stanza in the original, to which Brodsky himself hinted in a rare note for his English translators.²¹ Already in the second line of the first stanza Brodsky addresses Dante directly as 'thou,' reiterating the prophecy of exile, which was famously announced to the Florentine poet by his ancestor Cacciaguida in Canto XVII of the *Paradiso*. The prophecy asserts, in the future tense, that Dante will have to leave his native city of Florence:

Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta
più caramente; e questo è quello strale
che l'arco de lo essilio pria saetta.

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale.

Thou shalt leave everything loved most dearly, and this is the shaft
which the bow of exile shoots first. Thou shalt prove how salt is
the taste of another man's bread and how hard is the way up and
down another man's stairs.²²

In Brodsky's 'Dekabr' vo Florentsiii' the prophecy is formulated differently, because it confirms not only the fact of the departure, but also of non-return: 'ты не

²¹ Brodsky, Joseph, 'Note for translators to "Dekabr' vo Florentsiii"', trans. Barry Rubin, Joseph Brodsky Papers, GEN MSS 613, Box 56, Folder 1075, BRBL, Yale University.

²² Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. John D. Sinclair, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 244-245.

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вернешься сюда' ('you won't come back here'). This is clearly a reiteration of what by then had become an established fact of Dante's biography. At the same time, this line contains a paraphrase from Akhmatova's poem *Dante*. Brodsky uses the first line from her poem as the epigraph for his 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii':

ДАНТЕ

...mio bel San Giovanni.

Inferno

Он и после смерти не вернулся

В старую Флоренцию свою.

Этот, уходя, не оглянулся,

Этому я эту песнь пою.²³

Even after his death he did not return

To his ancient Florence.

To the one who did not look back while he was leaving

To him I am singing this song.²⁴

Akhmatova pays homage to Dante in the poem for not having succumbed to his own nostalgia for Florence, as well as to various voices, which urged his return to the city at the price of public humiliation. However, when Brodsky, an exile himself, utters the phrase 'you won't come back here' speaking from Florence proper, the phrase acquires quite a different undertone. Increasingly, it looks as though Brodsky

²³ Akhmatova, Anna, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, ed. N.V. Koroleva, Moscow: Tsitadel', 1999, vol. 4, p. 222 (italics mine).

²⁴ Quoted from the epigraph to Akhmatova, 'A Word about Dante', *My Half Century*, p. 266.

has arrived there, as it were, instead of Dante and is now going to describe Florence for the long-dead poet the way he finds it today. Here are some examples:

На Старом Мосту – теперь его починили –
где бюстует на фоне синих холмов Челлини,
бойко торгуют всяческой бранзулеткой;
волны перебирают ветку, журча, за веткой.

... the Old Bridge (new after repair),
where Cellini is peering at the hills' blue glare,
buzzes with heavy trading in bric-a-brac.
Flotsam is combed by the arching brick.

In the note to the English translation of the poem Brodsky comments on the line about the Old Bridge: ‘ “old bridge” – Ponte Vecchio, damaged by floods in 1966’.²⁵ Evidently Brodsky is introducing here quite a modern reference, which makes his conversation with Dante assume the air of a dialogue between two contemporaries. Dante himself might have provided the model for such an encounter between poets across the centuries when he described Statius’ meeting with Virgil, which, as Brodsky himself suggests in a later interview, was one of his favorite scenes in the *Divina commedia*:²⁶

²⁵ Brodsky, Joseph, ‘Note for Translators to “Dekabr’ vo Florentsii”’, trans. Barry Rubin, Joseph Brodsky Papers, GEN MSS 613, Box 56, Folder 1075, BRBL, Yale University.

²⁶ [Brodsky]: Il punto che più mi impressionò della “Divina Commedia” fu l’incontro di Virgilio con Stazio nel Purgatorio’ (‘The passage that impressed me most in the Divine Comedy was the encounter between Virgil and Statius in Purgatory’): Cirio, Rita, ‘La Casa Italia: confessioni d’autore: intervista con Josif Brodskij’, *Espresso*, 11 March 1991, 94.

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Stazio la gente ancor di là mi noma:
canta di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille;
ma caddi in via con la seconda soma.
Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,
che mi scaldar, della divina fiamma
onde sono allumati più di mille;
dell'Eneïda dico, la qual mamma
fummi e fummi nutrice poetando:
sanz'essa non fermai peso di dramma.
E per esser vivuto di là quando
visse Virgilio, assentirei un sole
più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando.

Men yonder still speak my name, which is Statius; and I sang of
Thebes and then of great Achilles, but fell by the way with the sec-
ond burden. The sparks that kindled the fire in me were from the
divine flame from which more than a thousand have been lit – I
mean the Aeneid, which was in poetry my mother and my nurse;
without it I had not weighed a drachm, and to have lived yonder
when Virgil lived I would have consented to a sun more than I was
due before coming forth from banishment.²⁷

Dante invested Statius' monologue with a lot of his own admiration for Virgil,
which his own character Dante so memorably expressed at the very beginning of the

²⁷ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. John D. Sinclair, New York: Oxford University Press, [1939] 1961, XXI:91-99, pp. 274-275.

Divina commedia in Canto I of *Inferno*.²⁸ It is very telling that Brodsky's favourite scene should be – in one of the most moving dialogues of the *Divina commedia* – a scene that features Statius humbly kneeling down before his Latin predecessor as soon as Dante reveals to Statius who was actually standing in front of him:

Questi, che guida in alto li occhi miei,
è quel Virgilio dal qual tu togliesti
forza a cantar delli uomini e de' dei.
[...]
Già s'inchinava ad abbracciar li piedi
al mio dottor, ma el li disse: 'Frate,
non far, chè tu se' ombra e ombra vedi'.
Ed ei surgendo: 'Or puoi la quantitate
comprender dell'amor ch'a te mi scalda,
quand'io dismento nostra vanitate,
trattando l'ombre come cosa salda.

He that directs my eyes on high is that Virgil from whom thou
didst take power to sing of men and gods; [...] Already he was
bending to embrace my Teacher's feet; but he said to him: 'Brother,
do not so, for thou art a shade and a shade thou seest'. And he, ris-

²⁸ 'Or se' tu quell Virgilio e quella fonte / che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume? / rispuos' io lui con vergognosa fronte. / "O delli altri poeti onore e lume, / vagliami lungo studio e 'l grande amore / che m'ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume. / Tu seà lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore; / tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi / lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore'" ('Art thou then that Virgil, that fountain which pours forth so rich a stream of speech?' I answered him, my brow covered with shame. "O glory and light of other poets, let the long study and the great love that has made me search thy volume avail me. Thou art my master and my author. Thou art he from whom alone I took the style whose beauty has brought me honour"): Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, ed. and trans. John D. Sinclair, New York: Oxford University Press, [1939] 1961, I:79-87, pp. 26-27.

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ing: 'Now thou canst understand the measure of the love that burns
in me for thee, when I forget our emptiness and treat shades as solid things'.²⁹

Statius' attitude, or Dante's, for that matter, towards his poetic predecessors, whom Dante called poetic parents (Statius, for instance, refers to Virgil's *Aeneid* as his poetic 'mother and nurse', see above), was characterized by boundless love, humble acknowledgement of one's debts and infinite reverence. I argue that this was an attitude Brodsky could relate to and which he clearly identified himself with and which was also echoed in 'A Thanksgiving', one of the last poems by his beloved W.H. Auden. Auden concludes a list of thinkers and poets that had inspired him at different times of his life, featuring among others Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, Robert Frost, W.B. Yeats, Horace, and Goethe, by admitting that without them his poetry would not have existed:

Fondly I ponder You all:
without You I couldn't have managed
even my weakest of lines.³⁰

For Brodsky this attitude represented the exact opposite of Bloom's concept of 'anxiety of influence', the way Brodsky had understood it, as I already suggested at the opening of this chapter. Instead Brodsky claimed that he neither addressed his contemporaries, nor posterity, in his poems, but tried to please the shadows of the predecessors he admired. Brodsky often quoted a line from Auden and saw an ally in

²⁹ Dante, *Purgatorio*, XXI:125-136, pp. 276-277.

³⁰ Auden, Wystan Hugh, 'A Thanksgiving' (1973), *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson, London: Faber and Faber, 1994, p. 671.

his favorite English language poet: 'I count myself a man of letters / Who writes, or hopes to, for his betters'.³¹

By the same token, Auden could also serve as the possible model for creating an imaginary conversation with a long-dead poet in 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', namely, in his poem 'Letter to Lord Byron', which was by Brodsky's own admission one of his favorite Auden poems. As a young poet Auden travelled on board a ship to Iceland – the beautiful, but presumably rather boring, land of his ancestors:

In certain quarters I had heard a rumour
(For all I know the rumour's only silly)
That Icelanders have little sense of humour.
I knew the country was extremely hilly,
....The climate unreliable and chilly;
So looking round for something light and easy
I pounced on you as warm and civilisé.³²

So to counterbalance what he was anticipating to be Iceland's heaviness, Auden took Byron's *Don Juan* with him on the trip: '... I have, at the age of twenty-nine / Just read *Don Juan* and found it fine. / I read it on the boat to Reykjavik. / Except when eating or asleep or sick'.³³ After a preamble and address, Auden proceeds to update Byron on all the literary gossip and major events which had taken place during his great predecessor's absence, such as, for instance, the emergence of the 'four great Russians' (Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoi), as well as later developments in literature, society, history, politics, science and technology. This seems to be quite

³¹ Auden, Wystan Hugh, 'Doggerel by a Senior Citizen', *As I Walked One Evening: Songs, Ballads, Lullabies, Limericks, and Other Light Verse*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 119.

³² Auden, 'Letter to Lord Byron', *As I Walked One Evening*, p. 49.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

fitting in a poem meant as a homage to a chatty and gossipy Lord Byron. 'Letter to Lord Byron' is very different in tone to 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', but as I will show, Auden suggested to Brodsky that a poetic conversation with a dead author should include a stylistic dialogue as well as a thematic one.

Between Brodsky and Dante the gap is presumably much greater than that between Auden and Byron, both in terms of time, language and culture. But there is an affinity in their predicament, which allows Brodsky to address Dante as 'thou' and also to have this conversation with him on equal terms. It is the circularity of exile which permits Brodsky to break this huge distance and connect with Dante. And here a Russian model might have been used instead – namely, his great predecessor Aleksander Pushkin, in his poem 'K Ovidiiu' ('To Ovid').

Pushkin and Ovid: Brotherhood of Exiles

In 1820 Pushkin was exiled by tsar Alexander I to Bessarabia, then a backwater of the Russian Empire. In 8 AD the Emperor Augustus banished Publius Ovidius Naso, a Roman poet at the zenith of his fame, to Tomis, a backward Roman province on the Black Sea. In his 1821 poem 'K Ovidiiu' Pushkin makes his readers believe that he had been banished to the very same location as his great predecessor Ovid. Pushkin explains that if he, back then a very young poet, allows himself to address the great Roman poet on equal terms, it is not by virtue of his poetic glory, but rather on the basis of their shared exilic predicament:

Как ты, враждующей покорствуя судьбе,
Не славой — участью я равен был тебе.³⁴

³⁴ Pushkin, Aleksandr, 'K Ovidiiu', *Zolotoi tom: sobranie sochineniie*, ed. Boris Tomashevskii, Moscow: Imidzh, 1993, pp. 380-381.

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Bowing down like you before adverse fortune, I am equal to you
not in glory – but by virtue of a shared predicament.

Following the logic of this bond between exiled poets, Brodsky starts a list of the parallels between his and Dante's fate. In the first stanza of 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', Brodsky mentions his age, which back then happened to be 35, that is, precisely the same age as that of Dante at the time of his banishment: 'It / is a beautiful city where *at a certain age* / one simply raises the collar to disengage / from passing humans'.³⁵ As to the prophecy of non-return, Brodsky rightly felt that it might apply to him as well, as he was never to return to his hometown, St Petersburg. That much he also suggested in a later interview to an Italian magazine, *Espresso*:

... parlare di Dante non è possibile, eppure una volta iniziato non ci si può più fermare. Dirò soltanto che la casa mentale, dopo la lettura della 'Commedia', non assunse contorni più precisi. Semmai il contrario; vi si aggiunse come la presenza di una scala a chiocciola. Poiché la 'Commedia' sarà tutto quello che si vuole, ma non un posto. La sua azione non si svolge nello spazio, ma nell'eternità. Ed è un'eternità che possiede una grande realtà, più di qualsiasi tempo presente, costringendo a dimenticare qualche volta persino il proprio indirizzo; e a maggior ragione, quindi, quello della casa mentale. *Una cosa è certa: molti anni dopo la mia lettura della 'Commedia' sono finito senza tetto.*³⁶

... it is impossible to talk about Dante, or else, once you start talking about him it is impossible to stop. I will just say one thing: after my reading of the *Comedy* my mental home did not acquire more precise

³⁵ Brodsky, 'December in Florence', *Collected Poems in English*, p. 130 (italics mine).

³⁶ Cirio, 'Casa Italia', p. 94 (italics mine).

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contours. If anything, just the opposite: a winding stair has been, as it were, added to it. For the *Comedy* is whatever you want, but not a place. Its action does not take place in a space, but in eternity. And this is a kind of eternity that possesses a greater reality than any type of the present, forcing you to forget sometimes even your own address; and most certainly that of your mental home.³⁷ One thing is for sure: many years after my reading of the *Comedy* I ended up as a homeless person.

In the second stanza Brodsky gives his own interpretation of the causes of Dante's exile:

твой подъезд в двух минутах от Синьории
намекает глухо, спустя века, на
причину изгнания: вблизи вулкана
невозможно жить, не показывая кулака

Yards off from where the Signoria looms,
the doorway, centuries later, suggests the best
cause of expulsion: one can't exist
by a volcano and show no fist

Brodsky had commented on these lines in a postcard to a friend, probably even before the poem was actually composed. On the other side of the postcard we can see Dante's portrait by Renaissance painter Andrea di Castagno (1457). Brodsky sent it on that very same visit from Piazza Nicola Demidoff in Florence on 4 January 1975 and it reads as follows: 'Я понимаю в чем дело с Данте. Он от Синьории как я от ГБ' ('I understand what happened to Dante. His house is the same distance from the

³⁷ In this interview Brodsky referred to Italy as his 'mental home'.

Signoria as mine from the [K]GB').³⁸ Brodsky seems to have discovered parallels in the circumstances that had caused both Dante's exile and his own. The reason lay in the proximity of their respective homes to the seats of city power. In Brodsky's case, this was the closeness of his house on Liteinyi Prospect in Leningrad to the KGB headquarters – 'Bolshoi Dom'. Given what Giuseppe Mazzotta calls 'the novelistic sense of Dante's life',³⁹ which was already grasped by Dante's first biographer Giovanni Boccaccio, Brodsky might actually not be too far off the mark here. For our purposes, what seems interesting about this is the measure of Brodsky's psychological identification with Dante. Years later, at this point a Nobel Laureate, Brodsky confirmed this in the interview to *Espresso*:

[L'intervistatrice]: ... come è stato il suo incontro con i classici italiani, quando e con chi ha avuto luogo? Ha incontrato prima Dante, Ariosto, Petrarca...

[Brodskij]: All'età di 22 anni lessi la 'Divina Commedia', allora appena uscita in Unione Sovietica in una magnifica traduzione di Mikhail Lozinskij. Credo che questo fu l'evento più significativo della mia vita, soprattutto dal punto di vista professionale, ma anche personale, perché l'uomo è quello che legge, per lo meno nel momento della lettura. *Se non sbaglio, per almeno tre settimane di seguito fui Dante Alighieri, senza parlare poi del fatto che vivevo davvero nei pressi di un equivalente del Palazzo della Signoria e che, passeggiando, mi imbattevo in qualsiasi tipo di Guelfo.*⁴⁰

³⁸ Brodsky, Joseph, 'Postcard to Veronique Schiltz', Series I. Personal Correspondence, Joseph Brodsky Papers, General Collection, GEN MSS 613, Box 7, Folder 567, BRBL, Yale University.

³⁹ See also Mazzotta, Giuseppe, 'Why did Dante write the *Comedy*? Why and how do we read it?' in: *Dante Now: Current Trends in Dante Studies*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995, pp. 63-79.

⁴⁰ Cirio, 'Casa Italia', p. 94 (italics mine).

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Interviewer: ...how did you first encounter Italian classics, when and with whom did you first meet? Was it Dante, Ariosto, Petrarch...

Brodsky: When I was twenty-two I read the *Divine Comedy*, which had just come out in the Soviet Union in the splendid translation by Mikhail Lozinsky. I believe that this was the most significant event in my life, especially from a professional point of view, but also from a personal one, because a man is what he reads, at least at the moment of reading. *If I am not mistaken, for at least three weeks in a row I was Dante Alighieri. Not to mention the fact that I lived back then close by to an equivalent of Palazzo della Signoria and each time I went for a walk I would bump into all sorts of Guelfs.*

Verse Form and Verse Metre as a Form of Tribute

And now a few words on the form of the poem. It is well known that Brodsky shared Auden's belief that 'The formal structure of the poem is not something distinct from its meaning but is intimately bound up with the latter as the body is with the soul'.⁴¹ In a similar vein, Auden considered his choice of verse metre in his poem 'A Letter to Lord Byron' as a homage to the author of *Don Juan*.⁴² Brodsky follows a similar line of thought: 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' pays homage to Dante first of all on the level of its structure. But instead of exactly reproducing the metre of the *Divina commedia*, Brodsky invents its equivalent. 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' consists of nine stanzas of nine lines each. Each stanza has a tripartite rhyme scheme: AAABBBCCC. Numbers, especially the number three, as is commonly known, had an important symbolic significance for

⁴¹ Auden, Wystan Hugh, 'Note', *W.H. Auden Reading his Poetry* [sound recording], London: Harper Collins Audio Publishers, 1955.

⁴² See Auden, 'Letter to Lord Byron', pp. 47-85.

Dante.⁴³ In a verse from the *Book of Wisdom* it is said that God had created everything according to number, measure, and weight.⁴⁴ Dante's use of *terza rima* as well as the overall tripartite division of the *Divina commedia* is thought to be an attempt on Dante's part to reproduce the symmetry, order, and harmony that he thinks he sees in the universe. Dante's poem is believed to reflect on this superior divine order of the universe as well as to be a part of this order.⁴⁵

All rhymes in 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' are feminine, some of them compound and rather sophisticated. They are thus not exactly Dante's *terzine*, but a version of them, just as Auden's 'Letter to Lord Byron' was written in rhyme-royal and not exactly in *ottava rima*: 'Ottava Rima would, I know, be proper, / The proper instrument on which to pay / My compliments, but I should come a cropper; / Rhyme-royal's difficult enough to play'.⁴⁶ Still this is a clear nod of reverence for Dante, to which Brodsky admits in a rare self-commentary:

Стихотворение — дантовское в определённом смысле. То есть употребляются, так сказать, тотальные терцины. И рифмы — довольно замечательные. Я помню, когда написал, был в полном восторге от себя, от своих рифм.

⁴³ See also Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and The Creation of Exile*, pp. 64-65: 'We know that the numbers 3 and 9 were deeply symbolic to the author of *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*, and Brodsky has pointedly chosen to play on this tradition'.

⁴⁴ Cf. the line from the Wisdom of Solomon, XI, 20: 'Pondere, mensura, numero Deus omnia fecit' [Vulgate] (All things has God wrought in number, weight and measure').

⁴⁵ See also Mazzotta, 'Why did Dante write the *Comedy*?' pp. 63-79.

⁴⁶ Auden, 'Letter to Lord Byron', p. 51.

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Не помню, в связи с чем я оказался во Флоренции. Было, действительно, холодно, сыро. Я там ходил, на что-то смотрел.⁴⁷

The poem is in a certain sense dantesque. The so-called total tercets are being used. And the rhymes are quite remarkable. I remember after I had just written it I was quite happy about myself and about my own rhymes.

I do not remember the exact circumstances of why I came to Florence. It was indeed very cold and damp. I walked there and looked around.

The verse metre is *dol'nik* (accentual verse), which Brodsky had just started using in his poetry. Brodsky's note for the English translators gives us an interesting insight into what metrical associations he expected his Russian readers to make in connection with the verse metre of 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii':

Meter: A kind of accentual verse; number of stresses per line not fixed; number of unstressed syllables between stresses variable. The *rhythm of natural speech* becomes the poem's rhythm; any rhythm that develops is natural. There is no preconceived intonation; whatever there is is neutral. There is no qualitative flavor coloring the speech.⁴⁸

The main idea in the passage above seems to be that the verse metre of the poem springs from the vernacular idiom. This idea provides a logical connection to the last stanza of 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', which affirms that the modern vernacular in Italy is ultimately the result of Dante's poetry. On the other hand, it echoes what Dante

⁴⁷ Brodsky, Joseph, *Peresechennaia mestnost': puteshestviia s kommentarii*, ed. Petr Vail', Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1995, p. 174 (italics mine).

⁴⁸ Brodsky, 'Note for translators of "Dekabr' vo Florentsii"' (italics mine).

had stated in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, the Latin treatise on the dignity of the Italian language which he wrote at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when ‘Italian’ was more of an ideal than a reality. Dante maintains that to achieve a dignified status, the Italian language, *il volgare*, should follow the models of the poets of the Sicilian and Tuscan poetic schools. In his *Divina commedia* Dante, of course, gave his own example of the use of this language, which eventually became the model and laid the foundations for modern Italian. At the same time, Dante never ceases to underline the vernacular quality of this new language: as opposed to Latin, it is spoken at home and is quite literally one’s mother tongue.⁴⁹

As for Brodsky, to ‘please the shadow’ of Dante, he uses, as it were, Dante’s own rhymes. For instance, the rhymes of the first *tercet* in ‘Dekabr’ vo Florentsii’ have the same sounds which Dante had used in his *Divina commedia*:

Двери вдыхают воздух и выдыхают пар; но	[parno]
ты не вернешься сюда, где, разбившись попарно,	[poparno]
населенье гуляет над обмелевшим Арно,	[Arno]
напоминая новых четвероногих.	

The doors inhale air and exhale **vapor; but**
 you won’t come back here, where paired off **in twos**
 the populace strolls above the shallowed **Arno**
 in the guise of new quadrupeds.

Dante himself had, in fact, put ‘Arno’ in the rhyming position several times in *Inferno* and one time each in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Here is the most famous example from *Paradiso*, Canto XI:

⁴⁹ See also Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Firenze: Società Dantesca Italiana, 1960.

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e per trovare a conversione acerba
troppo la gente e per non stare **indarno**,
redissi al frutto de l'italica erba,
nel crudo sasso intra Tevero e **Arno**
da Cristo prese l'ultimo sigillo,
che le sue membra due anni **portarno**.⁵⁰

...finding the people unripe for conversion and not being willing to remain **for no purpose**, he had returned to the harvest of the Italian fields, then, on the rough crag between the Tiber and the **Arno**, he received from Christ the last seal, which his members **bore** for two years.⁵¹

Moreover, in six out of nine stanzas Brodsky puts Italian names into the rhyming position of his tercets: *Arno*, *Signoria*, *Cellini*, *Brunelleschi*, *Ravenna*, *Lorenzo*. Accordingly, he has to find two rhymes each for these words in Russian:

в сырые – фонари; и – **Синьории** (II)
черны ли – починили – **Челлини** (III)
коленца – дворец, о – **Лоренцо** (VI)
вены – вербены – **Равенны** (VI)
Брунеллески – в блеске – перекрестке (VIII)

the raw –street lights – from [the] **Signoria** (II)
whether black – repaired – **Cellini** (III)
melodic figures – palazzo – **Lorenzo** (VI)

⁵⁰ Dante, *Paradiso*, XI:103-108, pp. 166-168.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XI: 103-108, pp. 166-169.

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veins – verbena – **Ravenna** (VI)

Brunelleschi – in the brilliance – at the intersection (VIII)

But the allusions to Dante do not stop here, as a closer look at stanza V reveals:

Дома стоят на земле, видимы лишь по пояс.
Тело в плаще, ныряя в сырую полость
рта подворотни, по ломаным, обветшалым
плоским зубам поднимается мелким шагом
к воспаленному небу с его шершавым
неизменным ‘16’; пугающий безголосьем,
звонок порождает в итоге скрипучее ‘просим, просим’:
в прихожей вас обступают две старые цифры ‘8’.

The damp
yellow palazzi are sunk in the earth waist-down.
A shape in an overcoat braves the dank
mouth of a gateway, mounts the decrepit, flat,
worn-out molars toward their red, inflamed
palate with its sure-as-fate
number 16. Voiceless, instilling fright,
a little bell in the end prompts a rasping ‘Wait!’
Two old crones let you in, each looks like the figure 8.

The whole scene is of interest to us for several reasons. First, according to Brodsky’s own commentary, the palazzi ‘from the waist down’ represent an ‘allusion to the giants in the *Inferno*, XXXI’:⁵²

⁵² Brodsky, ‘Note for translators of “Dekabr’ vo Florentsii”’.

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e disse: Pria che noi siam più avanti
acciò che 'l fatto men ti paia strano,
sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,
*e son nel pozzo intorno dalla ripa
dall'umbilico in giuso tutti quanti.*

and said: 'Before we go farther, that the fact may seem less strange
to thee, know that they are not towers, but *giants, and they are eve-*
ry one in the pit, round its banks, from the navel downward'.⁵³

Secondly, the stanza immediately evokes the famous passage from *Paradiso* XVII, quoted previously: 'è duro calle / lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale' ('how hard is the way up and down another man's stairs').⁵⁴ Brodsky reproduces here the image of an exile ascending the stairs in other people's apartments. The whole passage in Dante has become proverbial for its suggestion of the psychological and material hardships of exile. Mandelstam evokes it in his 1937 Voronezh poem:

С черствых лестниц, с площадей
С угловатыми дворцами
Круг Флоренции своей
Алигьери пел мощней
Утомленными губами.⁵⁵

⁵³ Dante, *Inferno*, XXXI:29-33, pp. 382-384 (italics mine).

⁵⁴ Dante, *Paradiso*, XVII:59-60, pp. 244-245.

⁵⁵ Mandelstam, Osip, 'Slyshu, slyshu rannii led' (21 January 1937.), *Izbrannoe*, Moscow: SP Interprint, 1991, p. 416 (italics mine).

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From the stale staircases, from the squares
with the clumsy palazzi
Alighieri sang more powerfully
the circle of his Florence
with his exhausted lips.

Mandelstam in his version of Dante's passage presents us with a paradox. The more exhausted the poet, i.e. the more exhausted his lips are ('утомленными губами'), the more adverse his exilic environment, with its 'stale bread' and 'steep stairs' (which Mandelstam conflated into 'stale stairs' ('черствых лестниц')) – the more 'powerful' ('мощней') the poet's voice becomes when he sings about his Florence. While physical and psychological hardships weaken the poet, they make his voice resound with even greater force. In 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' Brodsky takes his exiled poet even one step further – excuse the inevitable pun – towards the ultimate triumph of poetic justice. The steps that the poet mounts are the sounds of language; the feet are the feet of his verse; the staircase is that of his own palate. But in Russian the words 'нёбо' [niobo] – palate; and 'небо' [nebo] – sky, are almost identical. As a result of this characteristic pun, the line in Brodsky reads as follows: '[он] поднимается мелким шагом ... к небу' ('making small steps he is moving up ... towards the sky'). The sounds produced by his palate enable the exiled poet to ascend to the sky, which is to say, to reach the infinite. The way Brodsky plays on this similarity between 'нёбо' and 'небо' seems also to be a nod toward Dante. For, as suggested by Mandelstam in his *Razgovor o Dante (Conversation about Dante)*, Dante himself frequently made use of such minimal pairs:

Семантические циклы дантовских песней построены таким образом, что начинается, примерно,—'мёд', а кончается—'медь'; начинается—'лай', а кончается—'лёд'.

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The semantic cycles of Dantean cantos are constructed in such a way that what begins, for example, as 'honey' (*med*), ends up as 'bronze' (*med*'), what begins as 'a dog's bark' (*lai*), ends up as 'ice' (*led*).⁵⁶

'A Gulping Eye'

There are further instances in this poem when Brodsky directly evokes Dante's subject matter and imagery. One of the most subtle ones is in the first line of the first stanza: '*Глѳз, мизѳя, заглѳтывает*, погружаясь в сырые сумерки, как таблетки от памяти, фонари' ('the *pupil blinks but gulps* / the memory-numbing *pills* of opaque street-lamps') (italics and bolding added). Brodsky is using here what might be described as a truly dantesque metaphor: the organ of sight is conflated with the organ of eating. Dante used a similar metaphor in Canto XXXII of *Inferno*. This is how Mandelstam commented on this passage:

*Дант, когда ему нужно, называет веки глазными губами. Это
когда на ресницах виснут ледяные кристаллы мерзлых слез и
образуют корку, мешающую плакать.*

Gli occhi lor, ch'eran pria pur dentro molli,
Gocciar su per le labbra...
(Inf., XXXII, 46-47)

*Итак, страданье скрещивает органы чувств, создает гибриды,
приводит к зубастому глазу.*⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Mandelstam, Osip, 'Conversation about Dante', *The Complete Critical Prose and Letters*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1979, pp. 407-408.

⁵⁷ Mandelstam, 'Razgovor o Dante', *Izbrannoe*, p. 234.

Dante, when he feels the need, calls eyelids 'the lips of the eye.' This is when ice crystals of frozen tears hang from the lashes and form a shield which prevents weeping.⁵⁸

 Their eyes, which before were moist only within,
 gushed over at the lids [lips]...⁵⁹

Thus, *the suffering crosses the sense organs*, producing hybrids, and bringing about the **labial eye**.⁶⁰

The most fascinating thing about Brodsky's usage of Dante's image of a gulping eye is that he recreates it anew, evoking it in Russian both on semantic and phonetic levels. Tradition, as Brodsky understood it, means first of all accepting the challenge of the great predecessor and trying to 'continue in his vein'.⁶¹ As Dante had done before him in Italian ('*Gli occhi lor... dentro **molli**, / **Gocciar** su per **le labbra***'), Brodsky finds sound parallelism in Russian between the word '**glaz**' (eye) and '*zaglatyvat*' (gulp): '*Глáz, мизáя, заглáтывает*'.

Re-Interpreting Exile

The most conspicuous reference to Dante in the poem in question is the invocation of the famous animals that obstructed Dante's passage through the dark wood of the first canto of the *Inferno*, as I pointed out above. This allusion to the 'selva oscura', alongside the fact that Brodsky makes several references to the smoke of *Inferno*, led Lev Loseff to the impression of a very gloomy atmosphere in the poem: 'Florence in the

⁵⁸ Mandelstam, 'Conversation about Dante', p. 408 (italics and bold mine).

⁵⁹ Dante, *Inferno*, XXXII:46-47, p. 397.

⁶⁰ Mandelstam, 'Conversation about Dante', p. 408.

⁶¹ Brodsky, 'To Please a Shadow', *Less Than One: Essays*, London: Penguin Books, 1986, p. 358.

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poem is ... [a] cold, damp, and above all, dark city'.⁶² I would disagree. It is true that Brodsky evokes Dante's *Inferno* in the opening stanzas. It is also true that the references to Dante's exile and his nostalgia for Florence inevitably strike a tragic note, as, indeed, Dante himself always referred to his exile in these terms in the *Divina commedia*. Brodsky is no more than paying his tribute to the theme of Dante's homesickness, which, for instance, can be felt in the following lines from *Paradiso XXV*:

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per più anni macro,
vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov'io dormi agnello...⁶³

If it ever come to pass that the sacred poem to which both heaven
and earth have set their hand so that it has made me lean for many
years should overcome the cruelty that bars me from the fair
sheepfold where I slept as a lamb...⁶⁴

Both Akhmatova and Mandelstam had in fact very intimately grasped and identified with this nostalgia of Dante's. Akhmatova dedicates her entire poem 'Dante' to this theme and precedes it with the epigraph from Dante: 'il mio bel San Giovanni' – a passage in which Dante recalls the Florentine baptistery where he was baptised as a boy. Similarly, Mandelstam wrote in his *Razgovor o Dante*:

⁶² Quoted from Loseff, Lev, 'Brodsky in Florence', *Semicerchio: Rivista di Poesia Comparata*, 28/2003, 15.

⁶³ Dante, *Paradiso*, XXV:1-5, p. 358.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 359.

Городолюбие, городострашие, городоненавистничество—вот материя *Inferno*. Кольца ада не что иное, как сатурновы круги эмиграции. Для изгнанника свой единственный, запрещенный и безвозвратно утраченный город развеян всюду—он им окружен. Мне хочется сказать, что *Inferno* окружен Флоренцией.⁶⁵

Love of the city, passion for the city, hatred for the city – these serve as the materials of the *Inferno*. The rings of Hell are no more than Saturn's circles of emigration. To the exile his sole, forbidden, and irretrievably lost city is scattered everywhere – he is surrounded by it. I would like to say that the *Inferno* is surrounded by Florence.⁶⁶

In fact, all three – Akhmatova, Mandelstam, as well as Brodsky, in the final stanza of the poem – equate Florence with St. Petersburg, the native city all three poets had to abandon and came to miss at different times in their lives.⁶⁷ I would argue, however, that for Brodsky, the turning point in his attitude towards exile comes as early as in the first stanza of the poem when he mentions the beauty of Florence: 'это красивый город' ('this is a beautiful city'). The idea that beauty can atone for suffering in life is Brodsky's *idée fixe*. This is especially true when Brodsky speaks of the beauty of architecture, an art form, which both he and Mandelstam valued on a par with poetry. Here is just one characteristic passage from Brodsky's *Watermark*:

⁶⁵ Mandelstam, 'Razgovor o Dante', p. 264.

⁶⁶ Mandelstam, 'Conversation about Dante', p. 432.

⁶⁷ Akhmatova while in Tashkent during WWII, Mandelstam in Voronezh, during his exile and Brodsky following his expulsion from USSR. See also Meilakh and Toporov, 'Akhmatova i Dante', p. 59.

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[...] one's notion of afterlife in this city appears to be well taken care of by its clearly *paradisiacal* visual texture. *Sickness alone*, no matter how grave it may be, *won't avail you here of an infernal vision*.⁶⁸

So after striking a tragic note in the second stanza: 'For death is always a second Florence' – yet another paraphrase of Akhmatova's lines – Brodsky quite remarkably ends the stanza with a pun: 'смерть – это всегда вторая / Флоренция с архитектурой Рая' ('death is always a second Florence / with architecture of Paradise'). Brodsky seems to suggest that the beauty of Florence – its 'architecture of Paradise' – is capable of making up even for the existence of Hell. Incidentally, there are some startling echoes between this and Pavel Muratov's travel writing on Florence:

Нынешняя Флоренция, видимая от Сан Миниато, мало чем похожа на ту, к которой летело когда-то воображение Данте. [...] И все-таки сердце подсказывает, что эта Флоренция, та самая Флоренция Данте, святыня, – за которую он мог положить свою душу, суровую и нежную. В ней что-то навсегда осталось от тех времен, в чистоте и строгости ее очертаний, в синеве ее блаженной долины, в изгибе Арно, текущего с гор Казентина. Она запечатлевается отсюда в одном взгляде, памятном и хранимом потом на всю жизнь. Нет, кажется, человека, в ком этот хорошо известный 'общий вид' Флоренции не пробуждал бы чувства близости к высшей, чем земная, красоте.⁶⁹

Modern day Florence as viewed from San Miniato has little resemblance with the one that once stirred Dante's imagination. [...] And yet

⁶⁸ Brodsky, Joseph, *Watermark*, London: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 33 (italics and emphasis mine).

⁶⁹ Muratov, Pavel, 'Ot San Miniato', in: *Obrazy Italii*, Moscow: TERRA, 1999, p. 101 (italics and emphasis mine).

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the heart tells one that this Florence is the same – the Florence of Dante, the shrine for which he could sacrifice his soft and austere soul. It has retained something from those times, in its purity and the severity of its features, in the azure of its blessed valley, in the curves of the Arno, flowing down from the mountains of Casentino. It gets emblazoned in the memorable gaze cast from hence and cherished thereafter for an entire life. There is probably no such person in whom this well-known ‘general view’ of Florence did not stir feelings of proximity to a higher, **otherworldly beauty**.

Yet again, it is simply startling how close Brodsky gets in this poem to the Russian Silver Age in terms of sentiment and sensibility.

A Blessing in Disguise

In the sixth stanza, which is numerically relevant for Dante, as mentioned earlier, Brodsky gets closer to what I believe to be the main message of the poem with regard to a poet’s vocation as well as the role of exile in a poet’s life:

В пыльной кофейне глаз в полумраке кепки
привыкает к нимфам плафона, к амурам, к лепке;
ощущая нехватку в терцинах, в клетке
дряхлый щегол выводит свои коленца.
Солнечный луч, разбившийся о дворец, о
купол собора, в котором лежит Лоренцо,
проникает сквозь штору и согревает вены
грязного мрамора, кадку с цветком вербены;
и щегол разливается в центре проволочной Равенны.

In a dusty café, in the shade of your cap,

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eyes pick out frescoes, nymphs, cupids on their way up.

*In a cage, making up for the sour terza rima crop,
a seedy goldfinch juggles his sharp cadenza.*

A chance ray of sunlight splattering the palazzo
and the sacristy where lies Lorenzo
pierces thick blinds and titillates the venous
filthy marble, tubs of snow-white verbena;
and *the bird's ablaze within his wire Ravenna.*
(Italics and bold added)

In his essays on Frost and Hardy, Brodsky suggests that in poetry birds and poets should often be equated: 'a bird, as you know, is very often a bard, since technically speaking, both sing. ... we should bear in mind that [the] poet may be delegating certain aspects of his psyche to the bird'.⁷⁰ In 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' Brodsky takes this metaphor to its logical conclusion, equating the exiled Dante with the bird in the cage of Ravenna. But the most important fact for our purposes is that '*the bird can sing*'. This was one of Brodsky's central ideas, namely that the art of poetry does not require history. Life and art often part ways, for each possesses its own history, its own dynamics, and its own logic.⁷¹ The bard resembles a bird insofar as both do not require much to produce a song. Bird/bard can sing even in a cage in a dusty café – and sing beautifully. There is no doubt, though, that while Dante the man might crave it, Dante the poet does not need Florence to write his poetry. From poetry's vantage point, Ravenna with its 'salty bread' and 'steep stairs' did just as well. The same goes for Brodsky, who comes centuries later to Florence, sits in a dusty café and writes this poem in homage to Dante. Thus Giuseppe Mazzotta writes:

⁷⁰ Brodsky, *On Grief and Reason*, p. 98.

⁷¹ Brodsky, 'Uncommon Visage', *Less Than One*, p.48.

But for all its harshness, exile turned out to be for Dante a blessing in disguise, nothing less than the central, decisive experience of his life. His texts always speak of his exile as a darkening time and as a ravage of the spirit. But from 1302 to 1321, from the year of his exile to the year of his death, Dante's *history is essentially the history of his works*, and they cannot be understood without understanding the bleak clarity exile brought to his vision. He knew despair and almost certainly he contemplated suicide. *But because everything was now lost, nothing was lost.*⁷²

Brodsky tries to convey a very similar point of view with regard not only to Dante, but also to Ovid, Marina Tsvetaeva, Thomas Mann, and apparently himself as well, in a talk called 'Language as Otherland', which he delivered at Amherst College in 1976, the same year when the poem 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' was composed. If exile is a light form of execution, as Brodsky suggests at the beginning of the talk, a writer is more immune to its harshness than other mortals. This is because, as opposed to other mortals, a writer's true home, true residence is his language:

Dante Alighieri left his Florence, and because of that we have *La Divina Commedia* [...] Or take Ovid in Sarmatia where he wrote *Tristia*, *Ex Ponto* and completed *Fastes* – far from Rome but better than they wrote in Rome. Or take the best Russian poet of this century, Marina Tsvetaeva (best at least from my point of view) who wrote her last poems while living for almost 20 years outside of Russia where she returned in 1940 to hang herself in 1941. [...] *There are many other instances, and many of them, however tragic, prove that if anything, exile is bearable in terms of writing.* For any country is but a continua-

⁷² Mazzotta, 'Why did Dante write the *Comedy*?' p. 70 (italics mine).

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tion of space. All these ravings of a writer being cut out of his roots, deprived of his soil, are drivel. For man is not a tree, he is an animated creature. And if one uses this metaphor nonetheless, the real soil, real ground for the writer is language. Remember what Thomas Mann [...] said when he landed in America in 1937: 'German literature is wherever I am.' ... It is true, though, that in order to write and to write well – poetry especially – it is better to hear your language spoken every day – in grocery, in street-cars, in bed. That is, one should be in constant touch with the current idiom. But it is too bad when the idiom creates a writer. *Because it is precisely a writer who creates the idiom. Mind this – however solemn it may sound – people in Rome today speak Dante's Italian.*⁷³

As is often the case with his prose pieces, Brodsky simply paraphrases and expounds on what he had first said in his verse,⁷⁴ in this case, in 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii'. The poet may not return to the city from which he had been exiled, but the people who remain there will speak in *his* language. Therein lies the poet's ultimate triumph. By this token, a poet, even if he is exiled or persecuted, is never a victim, but a victor. Behind the poet's tone of defiance, one can sense that, at that time, he still had his doubts and fears lest he should not be able to carry on writing poetry outside of Russia. Time has told that Brodsky would continue writing poetry in Russian until virtually the very last day of his life, in addition to emerging, most extraordinarily, as an Eng-

⁷³ Joseph Brodsky, 'Language as Otherland', 1976, a talk delivered at Amherst College and Hunter College, Joseph Brodsky Papers, BRBL, Yale University, Box 123, Folder 2764.

⁷⁴ According to Brodsky, prose always lags behind poetry: he loved a metaphor which compares prose writers to the infantry, while assigning poets a part in the Royal Air Force. See Roberto Calasso, 'Speaking with Brodsky: A Memoir', presented at 'A Tribute to Joseph Brodsky', 17-18 March, 2011, John Cabot University & American Academy, Rome.

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lish language author as well. In the first years of exile, though, the example of Dante must have given Brodsky strength and enabled him to transcend his circumstances. This can be noticed in the last stanza of the poem, which against all odds strikes a defiantly triumphant note:

IX

Есть города, в которые нет возврата.
Солнце бьется в их окна, как в гладкие зеркала. То
есть, в них не проникнешь ни за какое злато.
Там всегда протекает река под шестью мостами.
Там есть места, где припадал устами
тоже к устам и пером к листам. И
там рябит от аркад, колоннад, от чугунных пугал;
там толпа говорит, осаждая трамвайный угол,
на языке человека, который убыл.

IX

There are cities one won't see again. The sun
throws its gold⁷⁵ at their frozen windows. But all the same
there is no entry, no proper sum.
There are always six bridges spanning the sluggish river.
There are places where lips touched lips for the first time ever,
or pen pressed paper with real fervor.
There are arcades, colonnades, iron idols that blur your lens.
There the streetcar's multitudes, jostling dense,
Speak in the tongue of a man who's departed thence.

⁷⁵ Next to this line there were the following markings by Brodsky on Alan Myer's translation draft: 'the idea of gold is crucial: implies sun itself': Brodsky, 'Note for translators of "Dekabr' vo Florentsii"'.

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Brodsky does not try to deny the tragic dimension of exile. On the contrary, the Russian original repeats the word 'там' ('there') like a tolling bell, pointing to the location of poet's home, four times (Brodsky's English self-translation of the poem uses the equivalent pronoun 'there' six times). Clearly, his native city, with all the memories it contained, continued haunting the exiled poet until the end. And yet, 'language lives by a poet', paraphrasing one of Brodsky's favorite lines from Auden's 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats'. For this reason alone, the poet is bound always to triumph. His friends, as well as his persecutors who 'cannot master speech', to quote Auden again, have no other choice but to use the language *he* coins. Brodsky reiterates the same concept in his Nobel Speech:

[...] while always older than the writer, language still possesses the colossal centrifugal energy imparted to it by its temporal potential – that is, by all the time lying ahead. And this potential is determined not so much by the quantitative body of the nation that speaks it (though it is determined by that, too) as by the quality of the poem written in it. It will suffice to recall the authors of Greek or Roman antiquity; it will suffice to recall Dante. And that which is being created today in Russian or English, for example, guarantees the existence of these languages over the course of the next millennium also. The poet, I wish to repeat, is language's means for existence – or, as my beloved Auden said, he is the one by whom it lives. I who write these lines will cease to be; so will you who read them. But the language in which they are written and in which you read them will remain, not merely because language is a more lasting thing than man, but because it is more capable of mutation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Brodsky, 'Uncommon Visage', *Less Than One*, p. 57.

In his play *Mramor (Marbles)*, Brodsky formulated a very similar concept with even greater concision, making reference to a poem by Akhmatova that features a swan and its twin:

if you are not a poet, your life's a cliché. Since everything is a cliché:
birth, love, old age, death, the Senate, war in Persia, Sirius and Canopus,
even Caesar. While the swan and its twin aren't. What's good
about Rome is that there've been so many poets. Caesars, of course,
too. But history is not them, it's what's said by the poets.⁷⁷

Brodsky's ideas about the endurance of poetry formulated in 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', as well as in his essays, echoes what Anna Akhmatova said about the poet's role *vis-à-vis* time. The previous quotation is tellingly from Akhmatova's 'Slovo o Pushkine' ('A Word about Pushkin'). The following one is from her 'Slovo o Dante' ('A Word about Dante'):

After an ocean of filth, deceit, lies, the complacency of friends ..., the Imperial Court, which, ... felt no shame at placing the great poet under secret surveillance – after all of this, how exhilarating and wonderful it is to see the prim, heartless ('swinish' as Alexandr Sergeyevich himself put it) and ... illiterate Petersburg watch as thousands of people, upon hearing the fateful news, rushed to the poet's house and remained there forever with all of Russia. *He conquered both time and space. ...And in vain do people believe that scores of handcrafted*

⁷⁷ Brodsky, Joseph, *Marbles: A Play in Three Acts*, trans. Alan Myers with the author, New York: Noonday Press, 1989, pp. 38-40.

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monuments can replace that one aere perennius (stronger than bronze)
not made by hand.⁷⁸

and

Гвельфы и гибеллины давно стали достоянием истории, белые и черные — тоже, а явление Беатриче в XXX песни 'Чистилища' — это явление навеки, и до сих пор перед всем миром она стоит под белым покрывалом, подпоясанная оливковой ветвью, в платье цвета живого огня и в зеленом плаще.⁷⁹

Guelphs and Ghibellines have long become history, blacks and whites – too; but the apparition of Beatrice in the XXX song of *Purgatorio* – this is something forever. And even today she stands covered with white veil, with her waist tied by an olive branch and a dress the color of the living flame in a green cloak.

This demonstrates how much Brodsky actually was an heir of the Acmeists in his perceptions of Dante.

Conclusions

Brodsky was very much concerned with tradition, as were his mentors Akhmatova, Mandelstam, and Dante before them. Dante called Virgil the source of everything he had learned about poetic composition, comparing him to a river from which all poetry began. By the same token, Akhmatova and Mandelstam regarded Dante as the father of all European poetry. Brodsky uses a different metaphor to pay homage to Dante as

⁷⁸ Akhmatova, 'A Word about Pushkin', *My Half Century*, pp. 149-150 (italics mine).

⁷⁹ Akhmatova, Anna, 'Slovo o Dante', *Sochinenia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2, Moscow: Tsitadel', 1999, p. 134.

the source of both modern literature and art. In stanza VIII of 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', Brodsky identifies Dante as the origin of Renaissance Art by imagining Florence as the nest which nurtured the bird/bard, Dante: 'Каменное гнездо оглашаемо громким визгом / тормозов' ('The stone nest resounds with a piercing squeal of brakes'). The same bird/bard in turn engendered the Renaissance or, metaphorically speaking, laid the egg of the dome of the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, whose construction was begun in Dante's time and was completed more than a century later in 1436 by Filippo Brunelleschi.

The poem 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' is a tribute not only to Dante, but to Mandelstam and Akhmatova as well. In it, Brodsky deals with crucial questions regarding a poet's place in the universe. Language, according to Brodsky, is the poet's ultimate home and salvation. Displacement, which entails a loss of home, of family, is a tragedy for every mortal. But for a poet, exile is first of all a linguistic experience, an extension of his poetic orbit. This was particularly true in Brodsky's case, for he had been 'exiled' from prison, as it were – a vicious semi-totalitarian country separated from the civilized world by an iron curtain.⁸⁰ Brodsky's exile allowed him to travel, to see the world and to reconnect with the source of world culture, as defined by Mandelstam. It also placed him in a much better position from which to establish a direct dialogue with eternity, of which the poem 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii' is a vivid illustration.

At the same time, one can say that Brodsky's pilgrimage to Florence made Russian literature and culture once again a part of European culture, as they had been prior to the Bolshevik coup d'état. This vision is reflected in 'Dekabr' vo Florentsii', which teaches that language travels with the poet, an idea Brodsky had expressed earlier by paraphrasing Thomas Mann: 'Russian literature is where the poet is at the

⁸⁰ See also Brodsky, 'The Condition We Call Exile', *On Grief And Reason*, pp. 23-24.

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moment'.⁸¹ This view is obliquely confirmed by Brodsky's identification with Dante, and his parallel identification of his native St. Petersburg with Florence, which represents a considerable expansion of the 'Petersburg Text' onto yet another old European city.

Brodsky published his poem in homage to Dante in 1975, but his obsession with Italy's greatest poet did not end with it. From *Watermark* (1989) we can glean that the shadow of the Florentine poet continued to haunt and inspire Brodsky late in his life:

Dante's descent into the netherworld owes as much to Homer's and Virgil's – episodic scenes, after all, in the Iliad and the Aeneid – as to Byzantine medieval literature about cholera, with its traditional conceit of premature burial and subsequent peregrination of the soul. Overzealous agents of the netherworld bustling around the cholera-stricken city would often zero in on a badly dehydrated body, put their lips to his nostrils, and suck away his life spirit, thereby proclaiming him dead and fit to be buried. Once underneath, the individual would pass through infinite halls and chambers, pleading that he has been consigned to the realm of the dead unjustly and seeking redress. Upon obtaining it – usually by facing a tribunal presided over by Hippocrates – he would return full of stories about those he had bumped into in the halls and chambers below: kings, queens, heroes, famous or infamous mortals of his time, repentant, resigned, defiant. Sounds familiar? Well, so much for the suggestive powers of the metier. One never knows

⁸¹ Joseph Brodsky, 'Language as Otherland'.

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what engenders what: an experience a language, or a language an experience. Both are capable of generating quite a lot.⁸²

⁸² Brodsky, *Watermark*, pp. 76-77 (italics mine).

Д. Н. АХАПКИН

**Цикл Иосифа Бродского «В Англии»: подтекст, многозначность,
КАНОН¹**

Среди обширного корпуса текстов, составляющих своеобразный поэтический травелог Бродского, до сих пор остается без должного внимания исследователей небольшой цикл, написанный в середине семидесятых годов и озаглавленный «В Англии».

Это может показаться странным, учитывая то, какое количество исследований посвящено «итальянским», «литовским», «мексиканским», «турецким» и «голландским» текстам поэта. С другой стороны, это неудивительно, поскольку то прикосновение к «духу места», географическим и культурным реалиям другой страны, которое и составляет главную суть любого травелога, в этом цикле почти отсутствует.

Существующие работы, посвященные циклу, немногочисленны. Прежде всего нужно отметить статью Валентины Полухиной «Английский Бродский».² Кроме того, к циклу «В Англии» обращается Джеральд Смит, по мнению которого выбор мест, названных в заглавиях стихотворений и отличающихся от мест обычного туристического паломничества, показывает, что Бродскому удалось проникнуть в цитадель английской жизни, а не просто

¹ Работа выполнена при поддержке гранта СПбГУ 0.38.518.2013 «Когнитивные механизмы преодоления информационной многозначности».

² Полухина В., «Английский Бродский», в кн.: *Иосиф Бродский: творчество, личность, судьба*, СПб.: Издательство журнала «Звезда», 1998, с. 49–59 (расширенная версия статьи перепечатана в: Полухина В., «Бродский в Англии и английский Бродский», в кн.: *Больше самого себя: о Бродском*, Томск: ИД СК-С, 2009, с. 314–334. Хочу также поблагодарить В. П. Полухину за ряд сведений о поездках Бродского в Англию, данных в частной беседе.

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удовольствоваться взглядом туриста, скользящим по достопримечательностям.³ Смит замечает также, что характерной особенностью стихотворений цикла является почти полное отсутствие обозначений цвета в цикле и его «безлюдность». Подробнее он останавливается на стихотворении «Йорк», к которому (главным образом из-за посвящения У.-Х. Одну) обращались и другие исследователи, рассматривая его как элегию памяти Одена отдельно от других текстов цикла.⁴

Бродский пишет семь стихотворений, вошедших в цикл «В Англии», по-видимому, в 1974-1976 годах. Первый из отразившихся в тексте визитов в Англию состоялся в июне 1974 (см. беседу Валентины Полухиной с Аланом Майерсом⁵). Сам Бродский говорил: «наверное, 1976 год».⁶ В посмертном сборнике английских стихов Бродского перевод этого цикла, сделанный Аланом

³ Smith, Gerald Stanton, 'England in Russian Émigré Poetry: Iosif Brodskii's "V Anglii"', in: McMillin, Arnold (ed.), *Under Eastern Eyes: The West as Reflected in Recent Russian Émigré Writing*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, pp. 17–24. Хотя сами путешествия Бродского по Англии вполне укладывались в традиционные туристические маршруты. Ср. свидетельство Дианы Абаевой-Майерс, которой, вместе с ее мужем, историком и (впоследствии) переводчиком, посвящен цикл: «А вообще мы тогда много ездили по Англии, и однажды, по дороге в Йоркшир побывали в доме Стерна, сидели под яблоней Ньютона, а в Йорке видели дом, в котором родился Оден» (Абаева-Майерс, Диана. «Мы гуляли с ним по небесам...» (Беседа с Исайей Берлином)), в кн.: *Иосиф Бродский: труды и дни*, М.: Независимая газета, 1998, с. 98)

⁴ Rigsbee, David, *Styles of Ruin: Joseph Brodsky and the Postmodernist Elegy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999; Соколов, Кирилл, «Бродский=Оден»: коммуникативный аспект стихотворения», в кн.: Полухиной, В.П., Фоменко, И.В. и Степанова, А.Г. (ред.), *Поэтика Иосифа Бродского*, Тверь: Твер. гос. ун-т, 2003), с. 378–385; Connolly, Sally, *Grief and Meter: Elegies for Poets after Auden*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2016.

⁵ Полухина, Валентина, *Иосиф Бродский глазами современников. Книга вторая (1996-2005)*, СПб.: Звезда, 2005, с. 459.

⁶ Бродский, Иосиф, *Пересеченная местность: путешествия с комментариями*, М.: Независимая газета, 1995, с. 160.

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Майерсом, датирован тем же 1976.⁷ По-русски цикл впервые вышел в «Ардисе» отдельной книжкой в 1977 году⁸ – это издание тиражом 60 экземпляров было подготовлено к дню рождения поэта Львом и Ниной Лосевыми.⁹

Названия мест обозначены в заглавиях стихотворений (хотя здесь тоже не все так просто, о чем ниже), в самих же текстах они появляются редко. Если задаться вопросом, что же из непосредственно связанного с Англией попало в сам цикл, то список будет не очень обширным — скалы Сассекса, скачки в Эпсоме, Джон Голсуорси и его любимый пасьянс «Паук»,¹⁰ пустоши Йорка, родины У.-Х. Одена, упоминание о бабочках Северной Англии, характерная форма соборов, море (и перифраз гимна «Правь, Британия, морями») и, наконец, железные дороги – сквозной мотив, проходящий через несколько стихотворений. Для характеристики всего остального хорошо подойдет строчка из самого же цикла: *в воде / отражается вид моста неизвестно где*.

Во многом описание напоминает описания других стран, как содержательно, так и риторически, включая привычный в поэтике Бродского хиазм:

⁷ Brodsky, Joseph, *Collected Poems in English*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000, p. 139.

⁸ Бродский, Иосиф, *В Англии*, Анн Арбор: Ардис, 1977.

⁹ Полухина, Валентина. *Иосиф Бродский: жизнь, труды, эпоха*, СПб.: Звезда, 2008, с. 245.

¹⁰ Впрочем, с пасьянсом произошла ошибка, как отмечает Диана Абаева-Майерс в интервью Льву Лосеву: «Я раскладывала пасьянс “Паук”. По книжке выучила из упрямства. Рассказала Иосифу, что он никогда не получался у президента Линкольна и Голсуорси (так я запомнила). А когда книга <A Part of Speech> по-русски выходила, дотошный редактор спросил у Иосифа: “Откуда ты взял, что Голсуорси любил пасьянс «Паук»?” Иосиф мне позвонил: “Проверь”. Оказалось, что это были Теодор Рузвельт и Сомерсет Моэм. Он решил оставить как было, все-таки» (цитируется в комментарии Л. Лосева в издании: Бродский, И.А. *Стихотворения и поэмы в 2 томах*, СПб.: Издательство Пушкинского дома, 2011, т. 2, с. 357).

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мир сливается в длинную улицу, на которой живут другие.
В этом смысле он — Англия. Англия в этом смысле
до сих пор Империя и в состоянии — если
верить музыке, булькающей водой, —
править морями. Впрочем — любой средой
(1976, 3:164–165).¹¹

Ср. с описанием другой страны:

Голландия есть плоская страна,
переходящая в конечном счете в море,
которое и есть, в конечном счете,
Голландия
(1993, 4:136).

Ничего специфически английского, отличающегося от точки зрения Бродского на мировую культуру и цивилизацию, высказанной довольно развернуто в целом ряде эссе, здесь, на первый взгляд, нет.

Так что же, признать, что цикл только формально связан с Англией, в отличие, скажем, от итальянских текстов поэта, где местные скульптура, живопись, и история переплетены в затейливый узор?¹²

¹¹ Здесь и далее цикл Бродского цитируется по публикации в семитомном собрании сочинений: *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского в 7 томах*, СПб.: Пушкинский фонд, 1998–2001. Другие стихотворения Бродского цитируются по тому же изданию с указанием в скобках года написания, номера тома и страницы.

¹² Вообще интересно, что Бродский, бывавший в Англии не реже, чем в Италии оставил мало «английских» текстов. За пределами рассматриваемого цикла можно говорить о стихотворениях «Темза в Челси» и «В северной части мира я отыскал приют...» — последнее написано по впечатлениям от месяца, проведенного летом 1981 года в шотландском графстве Файф на побережье Северного моря недалеко от городка Анструтера, где Бродский жил на ферме у друзей (Полухина, *Иосиф Бродский: жизнь, труды, эпоха*, с. 275).

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Не думаю, что связь здесь носит чисто формальный характер – если итальянские (и прежде всего венецианские) стихотворные травелоги Бродского отражают обилие впечатлений от места, то стихи, посвященные Англии, просто менее экстенсивны, заключая в себе большое количество аллюзий, подтекстов и размышлений.¹³ О причинах этого поэт говорит в интервью Свену Биркертсу:

В принципе, когда попадаешь в незнакомое место – и чем меньше о нем заранее знаешь, тем лучше, – почему-то обостряется ощущение собственной индивидуальности. Я это понял в Англии – в Брайтоне [смеется], в Йорке. Как-то четче видишь самого себя на новом фоне. Выпадаешь из своего привычного контекста, опять оказываешься как бы в ссылке. Полезно бывает избавиться от лишних иллюзий. Не относительно человечества в целом – от иллюзий на собственный счет. Как зерно под веялкой: шелуха улетучивается.¹⁴

Представляется, что связь Бродского с Англией сложнее, тоньше и более трудно уловима и она определяется не только ощущением «незнакомаго места», но и ощущением английской поэзии как идеала остранения – почти недостижимого, но к которому нельзя не стремиться. В интервью Анни Эпельбуэн поэт замечает:

Говоря об англичанах, о поэзии по-английски, я думаю, что это (не из патриотизма говорю, а потому, что мне приходится с этим довольно часто сталкиваться) более высокоразвитая форма языковой деятельности. Главное качество английской речи или

¹³ При этом в Англии Бродский бывал не реже, чем в Италии.

¹⁴ Бродский, И., *Книга интервью*, М.: Захаров, 2008, с. 97.

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английской литературы — не statement, то есть не утверждение, а understatement — отстранение, даже отчуждение в некотором роде. Это взгляд на явление со стороны.¹⁵

Эта мысль о сдержанности, даже, в каком-то смысле недосказанности, очень важна для понимания английского цикла стихотворений. Взгляд со стороны — одна из его центральных тем. И это взгляд не антропоморфный. Он задается в финале стихотворения «Брайтон-рок» как взгляд воды, в «Северном Кенсингтоне» появляется мышь (важный обитатель стихов Бродского), которая смотрит на изменившийся мир со стороны и не узнает его, в «Йорке» — боярышник как зритель безмолвного театра жизни, а в заключительных строках цикла возникает и исчезает птица, своим движением за пределы зрения и превращением в чистый звук напоминающая знаменитого ястреба из более позднего текста.

Бродский не случайно так внимателен к природе в этих стихотворениях. Для него Англия — это возможность остановиться, оглянуться вокруг, ощутить себя частью целого. Частью природы и, что еще более важно, частью языка.

Поэт говорил, комментируя цикл в беседе с Петром Вайлем (приведу развернутую цитату, так как она важна для дальнейшего рассуждения):

Так складывались обстоятельства, что года два я писать стихи не мог. Ну, и отсюда всякие, понятные в нашей профессии фанаберии: что ты сходишь с ума и так далее. Ничего особенного не происходило, никаких экзистенциальных катастроф, но ощущение субъективное возникало — что я, ну, по-английски, broken. И летом я был в Брайтоне — как всегда, сбегая из Штатов,

¹⁵ Там же, с. 150.

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потому что чрезвычайно жарко. Там принялся писать эти стихи и понял, что прихожу в себя. Это как бы восстановление равновесия. Достаточно важный момент.

Название отдельных частей – это все места, где я жил, за исключением Йорка, где просто был. В Ист Финчли, на севере Лондона, в то время жили Диана и Алан Майерс, которым все это посвящено. Аббатство в «Трех рыцарях» – собирательный образ, но впечатления – от Pembroke Rotunda в лондонском Сити. «Йорк» посвящен Одну, потому что он там родился.

Говорить об особом отношении к Англии как к родине английского языка – все равно что спрашивать, есть ли у меня особое отношение к России как к родине русского языка. Конечно, я Англию не так хорошо знаю, только какие-то ее части. Но эта страна для меня чрезвычайно-чрезвычайно дорога. Прежде всего, из-за языка. Из-за истории. И – из-за одной определенной вещи: духа индивидуальной ответственности, который отразился и в языке, и в истории. Дух, совершенно противоположный отечественному мироощущению.¹⁶

Восстановление равновесия, обретение покоя – один из отчетливо звучащих в цикле мотивов. Бродский описывает Англию как *плавающий в покое / мир*. Диана Абаева-Майерс, комментируя этот образ пишет:

В этих стихах есть слова о нашем тогдашнем доме, о нашей близости: Плавающий в покое / мир, где не спрашивают «что такое? / что ты сказал? повтори...». Я была невероятно растрогана,

¹⁶ Бродский, Иосиф, *Пересеченная местность: путешествия с комментариями*, М.: Независимая газета, 1995, с. 160-161.

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польщена и горда. Потому что он часто повторял, как замечательно, что я не переспрашиваю, а ему ничего не приходится повторять и объяснять. За границей это особенно ценишь.¹⁷

Брайтон описан в первом стихотворении, и это один из ключей ко всему циклу. Когда Бродский в процитированной беседе с Вайлем говорит, что названия отдельных частей – это места, где он жил или побывал, в этом скрывается недомолвка. Брайтон-рок – это не название места. Любопытный читатель тщетно будет искать его на карте Англии. Прежде всего в связи с этим стоит вспомнить роман Грэма Грина «Брайтон-рок» (1938) и одноименный фильм по роману (1947, реж. братья Дж. и Р. Буллинг). Но само название романа в свою очередь отсылает к одному из традиционных сувениров – конфете (rock) с надписью «Брайтон» внутри (Brighton rock). В одной из ключевых сцен романа происходит следующий диалог:

— People change — she said.

— O, no, they don't. Look at me. I've never changed. It's like those sticks of rock: bite it all the way down, you'll still read Brighton. That's human nature.¹⁸

Конфета, о которой идет речь у Грина, представляет собой своеобразный «карандаш», в сечении которого, сломав его в любом месте можно прочесть надпись «Брайтон».

¹⁷ Абаева-Майерс, ««Мы гуляли с ним по небесам...»», с. 98.

¹⁸ Greene, Graham, *Brighton Rock*, New York: Viking Press, 1938, p. 291.

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Таким образом, название стихотворения Бродского вводит мотив «спрятанного» текста. И действительно, в цикле содержится множество отсылок к другим произведениям, о чем будет сказано ниже. Пока же вернемся к первому стихотворению цикла.

«Брайтон-рок» задает мотивы пустоты, тишины, неподвижности, поддержанные на самых разных уровнях текста. Интересно посмотреть на выдвижение этих мотивов на лексическом (и даже морфологическом) уровнях: *ненужную черную вещь; лишней воды с лишней тьмой; порванная ячейка опустевшего невода; оцепеневшей лодкой; безлюдной, бесчеловечной глади* и т.п.

Морфологическое выдвижение более очевидно бросается в глаза в переводе,¹⁹ где конвергенция формантов *-less* и *un-* (*-in*) задает ощущение пустоты и отсутствия: *black useless thing; needless water and needless dark; a careless linnet cries; motionless boat; unpeopled, inhuman surface; gazing unwinking at it.*

Такое преобладание перечисленных мотивов не случайно. Первые два года вынужденной эмиграции были связаны со страхом поэта потерять собственный голос, находясь в отрыве от стихии русского языка. В интервью Арине Гинзбург Бродский вспоминает о письме от Чеслава Милоша, полученном в июле 1972 года и цитирует его: «Я понимаю, Бродский, что Вы сильно нервничаете, что Вас сейчас чрезвычайно волнует, будете ли Вы в состоянии продолжать заниматься своим творчеством вне стен отечества. Если Вы окажетесь не в состоянии, не ужасайтесь, потому что это произошло с очень

¹⁹ Алан Майерс — автор этого перевода и один из адресатов цикла — прекрасно представлял настроение Бродского во время визита в Англию, послужившего толчком к началу работы над циклом. И это, конечно, отразилось в выборе языковых средств. Перевод опубликован в: Brodsky, *Collected Poems*, pp. 133–139.

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многими. <...> И если это с Вами случится, что же, вот это и будет Ваша красная цена».²⁰

Ирена Грудзинская-Гросс отмечает:

Письмо Милоша было настолько важным потому, что в нем затронута проблема, которая в ту пору больше всего тревожила русского поэта: сможет ли он дальше писать? Спустя годы на одной из последних встреч с читателями Бродский вспоминал, что в начале пребывания в эмиграции им овладела паника: в первые же дни в Вене он тщетно пытался подобрать рифму к какому-то слову. Для него это было настоящее потрясение: ведь ему всегда удавалось найти нужную рифму к любому русскому слову. Казалось, случилось непоправимое — он начал забывать русский. Но на следующий день рифма была найдена».²¹

Надо отметить, что в пересказе Бродского письмо звучит намного резче, чем в оригинале, где Милош говорит не только о сложности занятия творчеством в ситуации изгнания, но и о преодолении этой сложности.²²

Этот страх молчания, как и стратегия его преодоления, очень хорошо просматривается в цикле «В Англии», начиная с финала первого стихотворения, где возникает своего рода удвоенная тишина – встреча *молчанья* и *попугая*:

²⁰ Бродский, *Книга интервью*, с. 389–380.

²¹ Грудзинская-Гросс, Ирена, *Милош и Бродский: магнитное поле*, М.: НЛЮ, 2013, с. 14–15.

²² Grudzińska-Gross, Irena, *Miłosz i Brodski: pole magnetyczne*, Kraków: Znak, 2007, pp. 18–20. См. также мою трактовку переписки Бродского и Милоша: Ахапкин, Денис, «В кругу другого языка: об одном эпизоде из переписки Иосифа Бродского и Чеслава Милоша», в кн.: *Пограничье как духовный опыт: Чеслав Милош, Иосиф Бродский, Томас Венцлова*, СПб.: Польский институт в Санкт-Петербурге, 2016, с. 127–144.

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В середине длинной или в конце короткой
жизни спускаешься к волнам не выкупаться, но ради
темно-серой, безлюдной, бесчеловечной глади,
схожей цветом с глазами, глядящими, не мигая,
на нее, как две капли воды. Как молчанье на попугая
(1976, 3:160).

Идиома *похожи как две капли воды* разрывается, чтобы создать зависящее от синтаксического членения фразы двойное прочтение: *Гладь как две капли воды похожа на глядящие, не мигая, глаза* или *гладь похожа на глаза, которые подобны двум каплям воды*. Бродский обращается здесь к своей излюбленной теме воды, соединяя ее с темой слова, точнее – отсутствия слова, молчания. В переглядывании молчания и попугая нет шанса на возникновение отклика, эха, которое, по Бродскому и есть поэзия – характеризуя в своем эссе об Ахматовой главные черты ее поэтики он пишет: «Эхо, иными словами, подчиняющееся разноголосице предметов в итоге приводит их к единому знаменателю; оно перестает быть формой и оборачивается нормой речи» («Муза плача», 1982, 5:30).

Тему молчания так или иначе обыгрывают концовки всех стихотворений, вплоть до ее снятия в финале цикла.

В последней строке «Северного Кенсингтона» (второе стихотворение цикла) все звуки, о которых идет речь в предыдущих строках (*шорох, шелест, звук шуршащих галькой шагов*) разрешаются репликой появляющейся мыши: *не узнаю* (ср. в приведенной выше цитате: «случилось непоправимое — он начал забывать русский»). Выход мыши подготовлен уже звуковой инструментровкой перечисленных образов с настойчивой аллитерацией на *ш* в описании будней Северного Кенсингтона (ничем, как замечает Дж. Смит, не примечательного, в

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отличие от гораздо более известного Южного Кенсингтона), *жизни мышью беготни*. Об образе мыши в поэзии Бродского подробно пишет Наталья Стрижевская, указывая, что, как и в античной мифологии, мышь у Бродского связана с идеей уходящего времени, и родственна музам, хотя и отличается них: «мыши в отличие от муз не хранят память, а лишают ее, ибо вкусивший пищу, которой касалась мышь, согласно мифу, забывает прошлое».²³ Лишаясь памяти и забывая прошлое, поэт лишается самой способности писать стихи.

Показателен в этом смысле финал «Сохо»:

И подковы сивки или каурки
В настоящем прошедшем, даже достигнув цели,
Не оставляют следов на снегу. Как лошади карусели
(1976, 3:161).

Этот образ может быть непонятен вне контекста всей поэзии Бродского, но для читателя, знающего константы поэтического мира автора цикла, он достаточно прозрачен. *Следы на снегу* у Бродского почти всегда выступают в качестве метафоры текста, прежде всего текста поэтического (ср. экспликацию этого образа в «Стихах о зимней кампании 1980 года»: *Если что-то чернеет, то только буквы. / Как следы уцелевшего чудом зайца* (1980, 3:195)).

«Ист Финчли» завершается возможностью произнести лишь одно слово: *потому что ты / произнес только одно: «цветы»*.

В «Трех рыцарях» мы видим образ навсегда опустившегося занавеса, единственным звуком при этом являются *аплодисменты боярышника*.

И только в «Йорке», посвященном У.-Х. Одну, находится механизм разрешения этой тишины.

²³ Стрижевская, Наталья, *Письмена перспективы: о поэзии Иосифа Бродского*, М.: Грааль, 1997, с. 285.

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Начало этого стихотворения совмещает в себе отсылки к двум важнейшим для Бродского поэтам. Кроме очевидного посвящения Одену и выбора в качестве места действия города, где он родился, первые строчки задают другую узнаваемую тему:

Бабочки Северной Англии пляшут над лебедою
под кирпичной стеной мертвой фабрики
(1976, 3:164).

Стихотворение, начинается с максимально будничного и сниженного образа капустниц (они будут названы в середине текста) – самых обычных бабочек не только для родины Одена, но прежде всего для родного города Бродского. Лебеда, растущая у кирпичной ограды, немедленно вызывает в памяти хрестоматийные строки Ахматовой:

Когда б вы знали, из какого сора
Растут стихи, не ведая стыда,
Как желтый одуванчик у забора,
Как лопухи и лебеда.²⁴

Вместе с включенной в текст «Йорка» прямой речью Одена и отсылками к его стихам ²⁵ это подчеркивает поэтический механизм преемственности,

²⁴ Ахматова, Анна, *После всего*, М.: МПИ, 1989, с. 145.

²⁵ Оденовские подтексты этого стихотворения привлекали внимание многих исследователей. Так, Валентина Полухина обращает внимание на то, что стихотворный перенос, оставляющий на конце строки предлоги или союзы, структурно соотносится с тем, что делает Оден в «Похвале известняку» (Polukhina, Valentina, *Joseph Brodsky: A Poet for Our Time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 93). Кирилл Соколов отмечает, что «Йорк», так же как и «Стихи на смерть Т. С. Элиота», «повторяет трехчастную структуру оденовского “In memory of W. B. Yeats” » (Соколов, «Бродский=Оден», с. 379).

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благодаря которому последующий поэт «ловит» слово предыдущего и объективирует персональный поэтический канон в собственном тексте:

Вычитая из меньшего большее, из человека – Время,
получаешь в остатке слова, выделяющиеся на белом
фоне отчетливей, чем удается телом
это сделать при жизни, даже сказав «лови!».

Что источник любви превращает в объект любви.
(1976, 3:165).

Это позволяет всему циклу выйти на тему обретения голоса в концовке последнего стихотворения. Тупик, в котором оказывается поэт (*человек приносит с собою тупик в любую / точку света*) преодолевается через обращение к поэтической традиции, прежде всего оденовской.²⁶ По мнению Кирилла Соколова в стихотворении «Йорк» «происходит снятие онтологической границы между автором элегии [Бродским] и ушедшим поэтом [Оден]». ²⁷ За счет этого происходит нарушение молчания, причем, как отмечает тот же исследователь, в последней рифмопаре стихотворения снимается и граница между русским и английским языками.²⁸

²⁶ Интересно, что сама фраза про тупик, с точки зрения Дэвида Ригсби, оказывается аллюзией на «Итаку» Кавафиса, особенно на строчку *Keep Ithaka always in your mind (Всегда в уме держи свою Итаку)* (Rigsbee, *Styles of Ruin*, p. 118).

²⁷ Соколов, ««Бродский=Оден»», с. 382.

²⁸ Соколов остроумно замечает, что в этой рифме мы видим «побуквенно произнесенное английское “love”, перекодированное в единицах русской графической системы (“love” → “el-ou-vi_i” → “лови”)» (там же, с. 381).

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Итак, очевидно, что образное движение внутри цикла последовательно демонстрирует тему поисков поэтического голоса, попытки «найти нужную рифму» и страха, что рифма не найдется — от молчащего попугая и «чучела перепелки» («Ист-Финчли») до птицы, поющей в бескрайнем небе, исчезающей из виду по мере нарастания звучания: *И чем громче поет она, / тем все меньше видна* (последнее, не имеющее названия, стихотворение цикла).²⁹

Остановимся чуть подробнее на том, что же помогает поэту преодолеть молчание (о котором он сказал еще в «Горбунове и Горчакове»: *Молчанье — это будущее слов, уже пожравших гласными всю вещьность*).

Как и зимой 1963–1964 года, в трагических обстоятельствах, когда было непонятно, как преодолеть и пережить ситуацию, связанную с личной драмой и с травлей поэта властями, на помощь приходит опора на традицию, своего рода персональный канон Бродского, оттолкнувшись от которого можно обрести свой голос. В то время это было очень хорошо видно в «Прощальной оде», где Бродский опирается на стихи Ахматовой, Цветаевой, Рильке (в переводе Пастернака) и русскую одическую традицию.³⁰ Для семидесятых годов принцип, как и ряд фигур поэтов, остается тем же, но Бродский использует другие тексты.

Помимо литературных аллюзий, цикл богат визуальными образами — в частности, в него включены отсылки к двум произведениям изобразительного

²⁹ Эта идея исчезновения птицы и превращения ее в звук, которая безусловно связана с мыслями о поэте и посмертной судьбе его стихотворений, находит свое последовательное развитие в стихотворении «Осенний крик ястреба».

³⁰ См. подробный анализ в моей статье об этом стихотворении: Ахапкин, Денис, «“Прощальная ода”: истоки жанра больших стихотворений», *Звезда*, 5/2000, 104-110.

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искусства: полотнам Теодора Жерико и Умберто Боччони.³¹ Однако, наиболее интересно, как поэт инкорпорирует в свой текст образы и детали других текстов, создавая развернутую многозначную картину.

Рассмотрим чуть подробнее третье стихотворение цикла, которое наиболее показательны для иллюстрации той опоры на канонические тексты, о которой идет речь выше – «Сохо». На первый взгляд оно содержит фрагментарную зарисовку из лондонской жизни, возможно, сцену в одном из клубов Сохо. Размолвка между мужчиной и женщиной, происходящая из-за того, что он не слышит ее, поглощенный мыслями о скачках, переключение точек зрения, перемещение в конце стихотворения в явно не английский зимний город – все это создает у читателя первое впечатление фрагментарного и не очень понятного монтажа.

Однако, внутри стихотворения, как и внутри *брайтонского леденца*, есть некий скрытый текст, проходящий через всю его структуру. Если мы начнем складывать разрозненные детали в единую картину, то придем к этому тексту, на который многое в «Сохо» и цикле в целом указывает.

Ключевые образы первых строк – зеркало в тяжелой раме, красавица, обои, которые рассматривает герой – вызывают в памяти первую из «Северных элегий» Анны Ахматовой:

Ореховые рамы у зеркал,
Каренинской красою изумленных,
И в коридорах узких те обои,

³¹ Детальный искусствоведческий анализ экфрастических отсылок Бродского дан в работе: Левинг, Юрий, «На подступах к визуальной эстетике Иосифа Бродского: пять заметок об авангарде», *Новое литературное обозрение*, 133/2015, 259–276.

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Которыми мы любовались в детстве
Под желтой керосиновой лампой.³²

Отметим, что и *желтая лампочка* в конце стихотворения Бродского соотносится с *желтой лампой* Ахматовой. Если отдельные случаи подобного совпадения всегда могут быть объяснены без обращения к понятию подтекста (почти у всех зеркал есть рамы, во многих комнатах есть обои, многие лампочки дают желтый свет, красавицы все еще были распространенным явлением в описываемое время), совмещение их в небольшом фрагменте текста может быть рассмотрено как прием выдвижения, указывающий за счет конвергенции деталей на важный для понимания стихотворения подтекст.

Если мы сделаем следующий шаг, то увидим, что прилагательное *каренинской* из элегии Ахматовой указывает на произведение, ряд мотивов которого отражен и в стихотворении Бродского.

Скачки, органично входящие в картину английской жизни, часто упоминающиеся железные дороги, дважды повторенная отсылка к собственному стихотворению поэта «Памяти Т. Б.»,³³ центральной темой которого является возможное самоубийство героини, могут быть соотнесены с сюжетом «Анны Карениной». Подобное прочтение может объяснить и ряд деталей, например, оборванную реплику героини «Сохо»: *не ответил / на второе письмо, и тогда я решила...*

³² Ахматова, *После всего*, с. 214.

³³ *Мертвая зыбь баюкает беспокойную щепку, / и отражение полощется рядом с оцепеневшей лодкой* («Брайтон-рок»); *Стоит закрыть глаза, как вижу пустую шлюпку, / замерзшую на воде посредине бухты* («Йорк») — ср. в «Памяти Т. Б.»: *ибо челнок твой вовсе / не затонул, но остался возле; Как ты качалась на волнах рядом / с лодкой.*

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Вспомним, что в романе Толстого Анна отправляется на станцию, отправив Вронскому два письма, на которые он не отвечает и телеграмму. Воспользуюсь кратким и емким пересказом Набокова, чтобы не цитировать обширно сам роман:

В субботу от Облонского, который находится в Петербурге, приходит телеграмма, сообщающая, что Каренин вряд ли даст Анне развод. Анна вновь ссорится с Вронским, и Вронский целый день отсутствует, улаживая свои дела. <...> Первое письмо, где Анна умоляет его не оставлять ее одну, послано ею с кучером Михайлой в конюшни, но Вронский уже уехал, посыльный и письмо возвращаются обратно.

Вронский приехал на станцию, чтобы отправиться на поезде к матери. Анна посылает все того же Михаилу с той же запиской к старой графине Вронской и одновременно посылает телеграмму ему вдогонку с просьбой вернуться к ней. Короткая телеграмма приходит прежде трагической записки.³⁴

Образы поездов и железной дороги проходят через весь цикл: *по / железнодорожным путям к брошенному депо; прелести пустыря – ржавого рельса, выдернутого штыря <...> поражения времени перед лицом железа; точно в окне экспресса, / уходящего в вечность, где не нужны колеса; вывернутые наизнанку / мелкие вещи <...> с колесом георгина, буксующим меж распорок, / как расхристанный локомотив Боччони;*³⁵ *человек в костюме, побитом молью, / провожает поезд.*³⁶

³⁴ Набоков, Владимир, *Лекции по русской литературе*. СПб.: Азбука-Классика, 2010. С. 274–275.

³⁵ Имеется в виду известная картина Умберто Боччони из серии «Состояния души» (1911), которая называется «Прощания» и на которой в кубистической манере изображен локомотив в нескольких

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Мотив скачек поддерживается полуэксплицитной отсылкой к известной картине:

Партнер созерцает стены,
где узоры обоев спустя восемь лет превратились в «Сцены
скачек в Эпсоме». — Флаги. Наездник в алом
картузе рвется к финишу на полуторагодовалом
жеребце. Все слилось в сплошное пятно. В ушах завывает ветер

Имеется в виду картина Теодора Жерико «Дерби в Эпсоме» (1821, Лувр), ряд деталей которой (цвет кепки жокея, общие особенности передачи движения, обобщенность фона при тщательной прорисовке движений лошадей) отражен в стихотворении.³⁷ За счет известной и не раз отмечавшейся искусствоведами

проекциях сразу. Картина находится в Нью-Йоркском Музее современного искусства (МоМА), однако Бродский, судя по его словам, был знаком с творчеством итальянского художника-футуриста еще до отъезда: «Припоминаю, что, когда мне было лет девятнадцать-двадцать, мне нравился Боккони. Я даже написал стихотворение, в котором попытался написать присущее ему ощущение движения» (Бродский, *Книга интервью*, с. 21).

³⁶ В цикле кроме этого есть ряд других повторяющихся мотивов. Цельность цикла, собственно, и обеспечивается переброской этих мотивов из текста в текст. Так, образы рельсов, поезда, железной дороги связывают стихотворения 2, 4 и 7 (а если принять сказанное выше о стихотворении «Сохо» — то и 3). Образ качающейся на волнах шлюпки — стихотворения 1 и 6, пляшущие над травой бабочки — 5 и 6, боярышник — 5 и 6, кирпичные стены — 2 и 6, черепица — 6 и 7 и т.д.

³⁷ Я благодарен анонимному рецензенту статьи за указание на то, что картины с изображением скачек часто висели на стенах пабов определенного сорта в Сохо. Безусловно, это дает нам представление о возможном происхождении образа, но совершенно не противоречит возможности отсылки к картине Жерико. Для Бродского вообще характерно преобразование отдельных, частных деталей в отсылки к культурно значимым в рамках его индивидуального канона текстам или произведениям искусства. Отмечу, что к тому же выводу о связи стихотворения Бродского и картины французского художника приходит Юрий Левинг, пишущий о визуальной эстетике Бродского: «В варианте названия картины у Бродского произошла редукция: “Сцены скачек в Эпсоме” не совсем то же самое, что “Дерби 1821 года в Эпсоме”;

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динамики картины Жерико, в воображении героя разворачивается подробная и насыщенная движением картина.

Подобные отсылки к другим текстам — как литературным, так и живописным — могли бы показаться неестественными и даже надуманными, если рассматривать их вне сложившейся к тому времени поэтики Бродского и его сознательной установки на использование подтекстов.

Так, уже упоминавшийся выше Алан Майерс вспоминает, что когда он высказал мнение о том, что заключительная часть «Большой элегии Джону Донну» показалась ему «лишней, ненужной», Бродский «мрачно сказал, что мне просто не хватило запаса “крылатых выражений”, чтобы ее понять».³⁸ Читатель, по Бродскому, должен обладать не только языковой компетенцией, но и знанием целого ряда прецедентных текстов — это хорошо видно по многим стихотворениям поэта.³⁹

тем не менее не вызывает сомнений, что Бродский имеет в виду конкретное полотно из собрания Лувра — в тексте и на картине совпадают алый цвет одежды всадника на темном коне, догоняющем вырвавшегося вперед финалиста; флагов не видно, но с правой стороны изображена метка ограды эпсомского ипподрома или вертикальный столб флагштока, отмеряющий полуторамильную дистанцию» (Левинг, «На подступах к визуальной эстетике Иосифа Бродского», с. 261). Отмечу, что чрезвычайно интересная статья Левинга, где среди прочего подробно анализируются визуальные аспекты использования картин Жерико и Боччони в цикле «В Англии» вышла уже после сдачи рукописи моей статьи в редакцию, поэтому я могу дать только эту короткую отсылку к этой работе. Тем не менее, о связи цикла с этими картинами я писал еще в своей книге комментариев к стихам Бродского, вышедшей в 2009 году (Ахапкин, Денис, *Иосиф Бродский после России: комментарии к стихам, 1972–1995*, СПб.: Звезда, 2009, с. 53).

³⁸ Полухина, *Иосиф Бродский глазами современников*, с. 453.

³⁹ Ср., например, стихотворения Бродского в жанре *In Memoriam*, для которых подобная особенность особенно характерна и неоднократно привлекала внимание исследователей (Левинтон, Георгий, «Смерть поэта: Иосиф Бродский», в кн.: *Иосиф Бродский: творчество, личность, судьба: итоги трех конференций*, СПб.: Звезда, 1998, с. 190-215; Левинтон, Георгий, «Три разговора: о любви, поэзии и (анти)государственной службе», в кн.: *Россия / Russia. Вып. 1[9]: семидесятые как предмет истории*

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Многие читатели и даже исследователи Бродского этой особенности поэтики Бродского в целом и цикла «В Англии» в частности не замечают. Валентина Полухина пишет:

Чем отличается Англия Бродского от Англии у других русских поэтов? – спросила я профессора русской литературы Оксфордского университета Джеральда Смита. «Отсутствием клише, – ответил он. – Он, как всегда, очень тщательно не говорит того, что было сказано до него, повторяет исключительно самого себя».⁴⁰

Тут необходимо уточнение – Бродский избегает только тех отсылок и клише, которые уже были использованы до него другими и стали общим местом. Он опирается на им же самим создаваемую индивидуальную версию канона.

Стихотворение, таким образом, получается многозначным, имеющим по меньшей мере двойное прочтение. Есть буквальный, сюжетный смысл, лежащий на поверхности – в данном случае уже описанная выше фрагментарная зарисовка из жизни, и есть второй смысловой план, существующий за счет отсылки к прецедентным текстам, своего рода индивидуальному канону Бродского.⁴¹

русской культуры, М.: Объед. гуманитар. изд-во, 1998, с. 213–288; Ахапкин, Денис, «Стихотворения In temotiam в художественной системе И. Бродского», в кн.: *Культура: соблазны понимания*, ч. 2, Петрозаводск, 1999, с. 123–133).

⁴⁰ Полухина, *Бродский в Англии*, с. 319.

⁴¹ Необходимо отметить, что такого рода операции вполне характерны для Бродского, который неоднократно задумывался о механизмах поэтического влияния, и, если и не создал собственной теории на этот счет, довольно четко обозначал свое неприятие ряда существующих теорий. Ср.: «Боязнь влияния, боязнь зависимости — это боязнь — и болезнь — дикаря, но не культуры, которая вся — преемственность,

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Когда мы сталкиваемся с подобными отсылками в поэзии Бродского, возникает вопрос, поставленный еще Дэвидом Бетеа — какова их функция и «какая поэтическая экономия здесь работает». ⁴² Дополняя интересную концепцию «триангулярного зрения», разработанную Бетеа в цитируемой монографии, ⁴³ попытаюсь обрисовать возможный механизм существования прецедентных текстов в поэтическом мире разбираемого цикла.⁴⁴

Представляется, что для этого хорошо подходит аналогия с известной теорией концептуальной интеграции М. Тернера и Ж. Фоконые, согласно которой одна из базовых операций, с помощью которых мы мыслим и познаем

вся — эхо. Пусть кто-нибудь передаст это господину Харалду Блуму» («Примечание к комментарию», 1992, 8:180). Бродский вполне предсказуемо отталкивается здесь от разработанной в начале семидесятых годов и фрейдистской по своей сути теории влияния Х. Блума, для которого «история плодотворного поэтического влияния <...> — это история страха и самосохраняющей карикатуры, искажения, извращения» (цитирую по русскому переводу: Блум, Хэролд, *Страх влияния: карта перечитывания*, Екатеринбург: Изд-во Урал. ун-та., 1998, с. 31). Другого отношения сложно ожидать от поэта, чье отношение к психоанализу очевидным образом сформировалось под влиянием Ахматовой. Как он позднее цитировал ее высказывание в беседе с Соломоном Волковым: «Фрейд — враг творчества номер один» (Волков, Соломон, *Диалоги с Иосифом Бродским*, М.: Независимая газета, 1998, с. 276). При этом можно предположить, что более поздние представления Блума о каноне должны быть скорее близки Бродскому. Объем и задачи моей работы не позволяют развернуть здесь эту тему более подробно.

⁴² Bethea, David M., *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 48.

⁴³ Согласно которой Бродский стремится к построению своего рода интертекстуального треугольника, в вершинах которого — его собственный текст, и тексты, принадлежащие, соответственно, русской и европейской поэтическим традициям.

⁴⁴ Это совершенно не противоречит конкретным наблюдениям Д. Бетеа, тем более, что переклички с другими текстами в цикле «В Англии» не ограничиваются только стихией русской литературы. Так, образ бабочек в «Йорке», посвященном Одну приходит, возможно, из оденовской «Хвалы известняку», где ручьи на йоркширских пустошах радуют бабочек и ящериц. Есть и ряд других возможных подтекстов, на которых, однако, я не буду останавливаться здесь подробно.

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мир, это смешение двух или более смысловых пространств при котором происходит не переосмысление одного из них в терминах другого, а создание подвижного, способного менять свои контуры смешанного смыслового пространства (или *бленда*)⁴⁵. Бродский смешивает два смысловых пространства (в одном из которых — поэт, боящийся потери голоса, в другом — героиня романа Толстого, осознающая потерю любви и любимого человека). В результате смешения этих пространств читатель «Сохо» чувствует атмосферу потерянности, неуверенности и неустойчивости — это развивает образы начала цикла, а затем снимается в его финальных стихотворениях через обращение к фигуре Одена и теме поэтического слова, которое может быть переброшено от поколения к поколению вопреки «страху влияния».

Что касается «поэтической экономии», как мне представляется, для Бродского здесь очень важно иметь возможность дать сильное чувство, не используя «сильных» поэтических слов,⁴⁶ просто описывая местность, растения, птиц и т.п. Это поддерживает то представление об «английскости» поэзии, которое существовало у Бродского, и которое он высказывает, например, в цитиrowавшемся выше интервью Анни Эпельбуэн. Оно связано, прежде всего, с понятием *understatement*.

Термин *understatement*, не имеющий точного соответствия в русской стилистической терминологии, можно приблизительно перевести как

⁴⁵ Fauconnier, Gilles, and Turner, Mark, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Я благодарен проф. Александре Смит, интересные замечания которой после моего доклада в Университете Эдинбурга об цикле Бродского побудили меня задуматься над этим применительно к стихотворению «Сохо».

⁴⁶ Ср. нелюбовь Ахматовой к «большим» словам в передаче Бродского: «мы слово “поэт” почти не употребляли, потому что Ахматова этого не одобряла, приговаривая: не понимаю я этих больших слов — “поэт”, “бильярд”») (Волков, *Диалоги с Иосифом Бродским*, с. 263–264).

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«сдержанное высказывание». Для Бродского – это прежде всего сдержанный, нейтральный тон и отсутствие сильных эмоций. Как, скажем, у его любимого Роберта Фроста: «Фрост – это колоссальная сдержанность: никаких восклицательных знаков, никакого подъема голоса».⁴⁷

Интересно, что об этих качествах Фроста говорит тот же автор, который восхищается поэзией Марины Цветаевой. Эти, казалось бы, несовместимые поэтические миры Бродскому удастся совместить в своей собственной поэзии. Если у Фроста «кошмарная ситуация (между людьми, например) возникает на лоне природы» (там же), то Бродский, оставляя в своем цикле «природную» составляющую с ее сдержанностью и нейтральностью, добавляет подтекст, который и отражает эмоциональное состояние автора, не говоря о нем прямо. Тексты, стоящие за стихотворением, видимые в нем внимательному читателю, словно надпись в *брайтонском леденце*, оказываются чрезвычайно важны для его глубинного понимания, точно так же, как для понимания текстов Фроста важно знание литературного кода описаний природы, который связывает ее состояния с эмоциональными состояниями человека.⁴⁸

Говоря о цикле «В Англии», трудно обойтись без обращения к еще одной важной особенности поэтической биографии Бродского – постоянному выстраиванию литературного канона (по крайней мере, в виде перечней авторов в эссе и интервью) и попыткам свое творчество в этот канон вписать.

Комментируя в беседе с Джоном Глэдом собственное высказывание из эссе «Поэт и проза» о том, что мышление любого литератора иерархично, Бродский отмечает:

⁴⁷ Там же. с. 93.

⁴⁸ Являясь, таким образом, не просто литературным, но, в каком-то смысле общекогнитивным, так как наши представления об эмоциях и умение их распознавать во многом задаются опытом чтения.

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Дело в том, что каждый литератор в течение жизни постоянно меняет свои оценки. В его сознании существует как бы табель о рангах, скажем, тот-то внизу, а тот-то наверху <...> В первую очередь это и относится к определенной шкале ценностей. И эта шкала ценностей действительно вертикальная шкала, не правда ли? Вообще, как мне представляется, литератор (по крайней мере я (единственный, о ком я могу говорить), выстраивает эту шкалу по следующим соображениям: тот или иной автор, та или иная идея важнее для него, чем другой автор или другая идея, – просто потому, что этот автор вбирает в себя предыдущих. То же самое происходит и с идеей, которая вместе с тем предлагает и какие-то новые, последующие идеи. Да и вообще сознание человека иерархично. Всякий, кто воспитан в лоне какой бы то ни было идеологии или каких-то принципов, выстраивает лестницу, на верху которой либо царь, либо Бог, либо начальник, либо идея, которая играет роль начальника.⁴⁹

Несмотря на справедливое замечание Льва Лосева о том, что Бродский-читатель всю жизнь пытался оттолкнуться от иерархии, навязываемой официальной советской историей литературы (и школьной программой),⁵⁰ литературное мышление его остается иерархичным и связано с существованием

⁴⁹ Бродский, *Книга интервью*, с. 114–115.

⁵⁰ «Иерархии, навязываемые школьной программой, вызвали протест, рудиментом которого оставалось ироническое отношение ко Льву Толстому (как “главному писателю” в официальной иерархии), равнодушие к Некрасову и Чехову» (Лосев, Лев, *Иосиф Бродский: опыт литературной биографии*, Москва: Молодая гвардия, 2006, с. 43). Интересно, что, отмечая «ироническое отношение ко Льву Толстому», Лосев в заключительной части своей книги упоминает о некоторых переключках Бродского и Толстого в текстах, связанных с темами страха и смерти («Холмы», «Памяти Т. Б.») (там же, с. 279–280).

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канона русской литературы, прежде всего поэзии. Правда, этот канон имеет мало общего с официальным и выстраивается Бродским самостоятельно.

Само существование канона поэт, как видно из приведенной выше цитаты объясняет пересечением когнитивных и социальных причин – иерархия сознания, сталкиваясь с жесткой иерархией общества порождает у человека желание ранжировать литературные тексты и выделить из них самые важные для общества или человека. Подобный взгляд, как кажется, повлиял на целое поколение поэтов и исследователей после Бродского. Так, к примеру, Михаил Гронас, объединяющий в себе обе ипостаси, отмечает, что в российской действительности, в отсутствии свободной прессы и реального участия в политике, средством социального познания, которое позволяет структурировать мир, является именно литература: «Русские используют литературных персонажей и конфликты в романах, которые они читают, чтобы организовать свою социальную реальность, используя значимые и запоминающиеся паттерны».⁵¹ Это преувеличенно сильное высказывание оказывается, на мой взгляд, более применимо к поэзии, чем к прозе, и оценкам, скорее, не социальным, а эстетическим – как говорил неоднократно Бродский, эстетическое в поэзии имеет примат над этическим и определяет его.

Создавая и описывая канон, поэт не может не задумываться о месте своих произведений в нем. Мне представляется, что многие особенности поэтики Бродского, часть из которых отразилась в цикле «В Англии», связаны прежде всего с механизмом автоканонизации, прослеживающимся еще с середины шестидесятых годов – когда включение в стихотворение подтекстов

⁵¹ Gronas, Mikhail, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics*, New York: Routledge, 2011.

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из канонических произведений русской и западной литературы помогает самому этому произведению начать движение в сторону канона.

Первые опыты Бродского в создании текстов *In memoriam*, особенно стихи, посвященные памяти Роберта Фроста, Т.С. Элиота, демонстрируют выстраивание определенной парадигмы англоязычной поэзии, с которой поэт пытается соотнести себя. Стихотворения на русском языке, такие, например, как «Прощальная ода», показывают, как преломляется в произведениях Бродского его индивидуальный канон русской поэзии.⁵²

Цикл «В Англии» является следующим шагом в этом направлении, расширяя рамки индивидуального канона и включая в него не только поэтические произведения, но и прозу (и даже живопись). Но поэзия, конечно,

⁵² Каноническое мышление очень хорошо проявляется и в стремлении Бродского если не выстроить иерархию (от этого он всегда пытается отказаться, хотя не всегда ему это удается), то задать явным образом списки поэтов и текстов, создавая своего рода «канон Бродского», который, в силу популярности и авторитетности поэта для русских читателей, значительным образом влияет на восприятие канона русской поэзии 20 века. Любовь к подобным спискам — важная особенность литературной и преподавательской деятельности Бродского. Лев Лосев отмечает: «Видимо, ему доставляло удовольствие их составлять. Они интересны еще и как свидетельства круга чтения самого Бродского и более или менее совпадают с кругом чтения каждого интеллигента-гуманитария его поколения: программа филологического факультета плюс самостоятельные чтения по философии и из литературы двадцатого века (в последнем разделе наиболее проявились личные пристрастия Бродского). Как ни странно, находились американские студенты, которые справлялись с таким списком, и в своем классе Бродский имел дело не только с малокультурными недорослями» (Лосев, *Иосиф Бродский*, с. 203). Мне пока не удалось найти такого списка, связанного с русскими поэтами, но можно привести множество цитат из интервью Бродского. Ограничусь двумя примерами. В беседе с Дж. Хэнлоном он отмечает: «Хорошо, если вы имеете в виду двадцатый век, я дам список поэтов. Ахматова. Мандельштам. Цветаева. Она, по-моему, величайшая. Величайшим поэтом двадцатого века была женщина! Я назвал Пастернака? Нет? Пастернак, это очевидно. Клюев. Ходасевич. Заболоцкий. Так, достаточно, знакомство с этими поэтами и так займет много времени» (Бродский, *Книга интервью*, с. 47). Позже, в интервью Еве Берч и Дэвиду Чину (1980) поэт повторяет в несколько сокращенном виде этот список: «Русские - Цветаева, Мандельштам, Клюев, Заболоцкий» (там же, с. 75).

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остается наиболее важной. Так, в стихотворении «Северный Кенсингтон» строчка *Шорох «Ирландского времени», гонимого ветром по*, контаминирует названия двух важнейших книг из канона Бродского: «Шум времени» Мандельштама и «Бег времени» Ахматовой. Или в посвященном Одну «Йорке», где в реплике адресата стихотворения *я знал трех великих поэтов* косвенно возникают фигуры Йейтса, Фроста и Брехта.⁵³

Именно поэтому, по упомянутому справедливому замечанию Джеральда Смита, в цикле почти нет людей — зато есть их голоса, голоса тех представителей «мировой культуры» которые важны для поэта и помогают ему, в конце концов, преодолеть собственное молчание. Подобного рода устройство текста, опробованное в цикле «В Англии» становится обычным для поэзии Бродского конца семидесятых-восемидесятых годов, а Англия почти не упоминается больше в его текстах — точно так же, как очень редко и эпизодически упоминается в них Нью-Йорк, ставший его вторым домом, или Ленинград, из которого он уехал в 1972 чтобы больше никогда не назвать родной город по имени в стихах.⁵⁴

Многозначность, возникающая за счет использования отсылок к каноническим текстам, смешения смысловых пространств текстов Бродского и произведений, к которым они отсылают, конечно, создает трудности для читателя. Каждое стихотворение требует значительного когнитивного усилия для своего осмысления, однако это усилие может быть награждено

⁵³ Как отмечает Л. Лосев, «Бродский пояснял, что Оден здесь говорит об У.Б. Йейтсе, Роберте Фросте и Бертольде Брехте. С высокой оценкой последнего Бродский не соглашался и полагал, что у Одена это дань левацким увлечениям молодости» (Бродский, *Стихотворения и поэмы*, т. 2, с. 358).

⁵⁴ Хотя образ города на Неве часто прослеживается за силуэтами других городов, речь в поэзии Бродского после отъезда всегда идет скорее об идее Петербурга — идее в платоновском смысле (ср. стихотворение «Развивая Платона»).

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удовольствием от чтения для того, кто способен заглянуть внутрь и увидеть скрытую надпись внутри *брайтонского леденца*.

Подводя итог, можно сказать, что цикл «В Англии» стал для Бродского своеобразным ответом на письмо Милоша – проверкой того, сможет ли он преодолеть молчание, связанное с потерей родной почвы и сохранить дар поэтической речи. Поэту удалось сделать саму кризисную ситуацию основной темой цикла и, слыша голоса Ахматовой, Одена и других, присоединить к ним собственный голос. Конечно, это не единственное произведение, в котором Бродский решал эту задачу – среди других следует назвать, по крайней мере, «Колыбельную Трескового мыса» и «Осенний крик ястреба», в которых используется сходная поэтическая стратегия. Но английский цикл, как представляется, имеет особое значение – не случайно именно его друзья Бродского издали отдельной книгой как подарок поэту на день рождения 24 мая 1977 года.

JOSEPHINE VON ZITZEWITZ

SELF-CANONISATION AS A WAY INTO THE CANON:
THE CASE OF THE LENINGRAD UNDERGROUND

This essay considers five poets who are now often referred to as members of the so-called ‘Leningrad School’:¹ Oleg Okhapkin, Elena Shvarts, Viktor Krivulin, Aleksandr Mironov, and Sergei Stratanovskii. They produced their seminal work in the unofficial cultural sphere of Leningrad in the 1970s and 1980s, variously labelled ‘underground’ or ‘second culture’.²

Exclusion from the official literary process precluded these writers from reaching a readership beyond those who could access samizdat. This means that their work was not addressed by the critics, editors and academics representing official cultural institutions, which play a crucial role in canon formation, a circumstance which seemed to predict permanent exclusion from the canon of twentieth-century Russian literature. However, thirty-five years later the literary underground is attracting the attention of researchers who recognise it as an important stage in the development of Russian poetry.³ Moreover, a number of underground poets are now not only pub-

¹ The term ‘leningradskaia shkola’ is found, for example, in Savitskii, Stanislav, *Andegraund: istoriia i mify leningradskei neofitsial'noi literatury*, Moscow: NLO, 2002, p. 20, and Kreid, Vladimir, ‘Stratanovskii i leningradskaia poeticheskaia shkola’, *Novyi zhurnal*, 155/1984, 103-114.

² See Savitskii, *Andegraund*, p. 43.

³ There are now several book-length studies that focus on aesthetic and theoretical concerns, including Savitskii, *Andegraund*; Zhitenev, Aleksandr, *Poeziia neomodernisma*, St Petersburg: INAPRESS, 2012; the essay collection Jaccard, Jean-Philippe (ed.), *Vtoraia kul'tura: neofitsial'naia poeziia Leningrada v 1970-e-1980-e gody*, St Petersburg: Rostok, 2013; von Zitzewitz, Josephine, *Poetry and the Leningrad Religious-Philosophical Seminar 1974-1980: Music for a Deaf Age*, Oxford: Legenda, 2016.

lished as individuals, but also anthologised, a further indication of latent canonicity.⁴ Several factors conspired to make this possible. The first was the policy of *glasnost* and the concomitant relaxation of censorship that enabled the unofficial writers to publish in the official press. The second factor was created by the poets themselves: they employed an array of strategies for writing themselves into the canon of Russian poetry. Their idea of what this canon should look like differed from the canon propagated by Soviet cultural institutions, emphasising the importance of the modernists and omitting Socialist Realism. History, as it were, seems to have confirmed the unofficial poets' taste, although the canon of the twentieth century as it is now emerging is more nuanced than the Leningrad underground claimed and also includes Soviet poets.⁵

The Official Origins of the Underground

The poets who made unofficial Leningrad culture so vibrant in the 1970s had grown up in an environment that afforded huge importance to literature and encouraged young people to write. All figures under study began writing as adolescents under the influence of senior literary figures who headed LITOs (literary associations attached

⁴ Cf. the following post-Soviet anthologies: Toporov, Viktor and Maksimov, Maksim (eds), *Pozdnie peterburzhtsy*, St Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 1995 [Krivulin, Okhapkin, Mironov]; Akhmet'ev, A, Lukomnikov, G., Orlov, V., and Uritskii, A. (eds), *Russkie stikhi 1950-2000*, 2 vols, Moscow: Letnii sad, 2010 [Krivulin, Mironov, Shvarts, Stratanovskii]. In English: Kates, J. and Aizenberg, Mikhail (eds), *In the Grip of Strange Thoughts: Russian Poetry in A New Era*, London: Bloodaxe, 1998 [Shvarts, Krivulin, Stratanovskii]; Bunimovich, Evgenii and Kates, J. (eds), *Contemporary Russian Poetry: An Anthology*, Champaign, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008 [Shvarts]. A new annual anthology, *Sobranie sochinenii: Poeziia Peterburga*, Limbus Press, 2010-, has published Stratanovskii (2010) and, posthumously, Shvarts and Krivulin (2010), Mironov (2011), and Okhapkin (2013).

⁵ A critic who has written extensively about the evolution of canons is Brian Boyd. See Boyd, Brian, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2009; also Boyd, Brian (ed.), *Evolution, Literature and Film: A Reader*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

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to Houses of Culture and similar institutions) and other circles fostering new writers.⁶ Without the stranglehold of ideological considerations on art, some of these young people would surely have risen to literary fame. As it were, an entire generation of writers whose aesthetics did not conform to official norms was deprived of publication opportunities and thus a wider audience. Yet the intellectuals and writers of this generation had established ample social networks that became the foundation for a lively cultural underground, with people gathering in private flats and public places such as the café at Malaia Sadovaia Street, and later the Café Saigon, in order to discuss and read poetry.⁷

The underground managed to create a literary process of its own, but many practices emulated official structures. For a start, the unofficial writers' attitude towards literature was a perfectly regular product of Soviet education. By accepting claims for the value of literature beyond itself the underground writers worked within the parameters of Soviet culture. They merely read and wrote the wrong texts.⁸ From

⁶ Official organisations, including the Writers' Union, provided targeted programs for young poets; see the first part of Lygo, Emily, *Leningrad Poetry 1853-1975: The Thaw Generation*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2010. All poets under study attended the LITO led by Gleb Semenov. Compare the respective biographical entries in Severiukhin, D., Dolinin, V., Ivanov, B. and Ostanin, B. (eds), *Samizdat Leningrada. 1950e—1980e gody. literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, Moscow: NLO, 2003.

⁷ The history of the two cafés is extensively documented in Valieva, Iu. (ed.), *Sumerki 'Saigona'*, St Petersburg: Samizdat, 2009.

⁸ Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, a major poet whose career began in the underground, argues that this was the reason why underground culture was irredeemably derivative: 'Я назвал бы (это поколение) поколением, разбитым вдребезги, ибо оно не создало ничего. [...] оно было альтернативным поколением. А альтернативное поколение – это негатив. Это не изменение конфигурации. Это то же самое, только обратного цвета' ('I would call this a shattered generation, because it did not create anything. It was an alternative generation. Alternative generation means it was a negative. There was no change of configuration. It was the same stuff, only black instead of white'): Dragomoshchenko, Arkadii and Beliak, Nikolai, 'My govorim ne o meste, a o sud'be pokolenia: beseda s Tat'ianoi Koval'kovoi', in: Valieva, *Sumerki 'Saigona'*, p. 147.

the mid-1970s onwards, samizdat periodicals such as *37*, *Chasy*, *Severnaia pochta*, and *Obvodnyi kanal* became the underground poets' primary vehicles for distributing their own literary texts and critical writings. Yet one glance reveals the similarities between these typewritten, individually bound compilations and Soviet 'thick' literary journals, such as *Novyi mir*, *Zvezda*, or *Moskva*. They featured sections for poetry, prose, criticism and book reviews, religious or philosophical essays, and translations, and they had dedicated section editors. There were also sections for interactions with readers, such as 'letter to the editor' and 'polemics'.⁹ Indeed, it is wrong to assume that unofficial literature aimed to create a cultural sphere that was wholly separate from the world around. On the contrary, the poets never completely renounced the dream of becoming officially published writers. In 1974, a group that included Viktor Krivulin compiled a poetry anthology, *Lepta*, and tried to have it published by the *Sovetskii pisatel'* publishing house without the involvement of *Glavlit*; this endeavour was unsuccessful.¹⁰ Oleg Okhapkin submitted a collection for publication to *Lenizdat* as late as 1978, but refused to comply with the request of his reviewers to introduce alterations.¹¹ All poets under study joined the KGB-sanctioned literary association

⁹ Hidden away in many different archives for decades, the surviving journals are gradually becoming available online. The University of Toronto has created a searchable online catalogue of samizdat periodicals and a platform for uploading digitised copies and scholarly materials <http://samizdatcollections.library.utoronto.ca/>.

The Andrei Belyi Centre in St Petersburg is rapidly extending its electronic archives: <http://arch.susla.ru/index.php>.

¹⁰ For information see *Samizdat Leningrada*, p. 419. The materials relating to the *Lepta* case are published in Kuzminskii, K. and Kovalev, G. (eds), *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry*, Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1980-1986, vol 5B. According to Ivanov, B., 'V bytnost' Peterburga Leningradom: O leningradskom samizdate', *NLO*, 14/1995, 192, the establishment of the samizdat journals *37* and *Chasy* in 1976 was in part motivated by the collapse of the *Lepta* project.

¹¹ He described the editor's suggestions as 'мне предлагают искалечить свои стихи' ('they suggest I maim my poems'): (cited in *Khristianskii Seminar (Vol'noe slovo*, 39), Frankfurt: Posev, 1981, p. 92).

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‘Klub-81’ that appeared in 1981, and submitted poems to the collection *Krug*, published in 1985.¹²

The texts republished and discussed in the samizdat journals provide some information about which writers the unofficial poets considered canonical. The subjects of unofficial study groups and seminars is also revealing, e.g. I. Martynov’s seminar on the Acmeist poet Nikolai Gumilev, whose work was still taboo in 1976 (‘Gumilevskie chtenia’, (‘Gumilev Readings’, 1976-1983)),¹³ or Elena Shvarts’s ‘Shimpozium’ (‘Symposium’, 1975-1982), a nod to Aleksei Remizov’s literary parody circle ‘Obezian’e tsarstvo’ (Monkey Kingdom).¹⁴ The ‘Religious-Philosophical Seminar’ (Religiozno-filosofskii seminar) (1974-1980), organised by Tat’iana Goricheva and Viktor Krivulin, was modelled on Dmitrii Merezhkovskii’s ‘Religious-Philosophical Assemblies’ (Religiozno-filosofskie sobraniia) of 1901-1903, which brought together Symbolist poets and religious thinkers.¹⁵ However, the richest sources are the literary influences evident in the unofficial poets’ own texts. They include nineteenth-century classics (Derzhavin, Pushkin, Baratynskii) and modernists (Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, Khlebnikov, to name but a few). The members of the latter group were still being regarded with suspicion by the Soviet literary establishment, but slowly beginning to (re-)appear in print.

¹² *Klub-81* and *Krug* are described in *Samizdat Leningrada*, pp. 410-413 and 415-416 respectively. A detailed history of *Klub-81*, containing archival materials and compiled by Boris Ivanov, one of its initiators, was published in 2015: Ivanov, B., *Istoriia Kluba-81*, St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Ivana Limbakha, 2015.

¹³ The unofficial Leningrad writer Evgenii Pazukhin remembers his peers’ passion for Gumilev in his memoir *Zerkalo slavy*, Samizdat, 1988, p. 14.

¹⁴ For details on the ‘Shimpozium’ see Bishop, Sarah Clovis, ‘In Memoriam: Elena Andreevna Shvarts (17 March 1948 – 11 March 2010)’, *Slavonica*, 16:2/2010, 115-116; and Pasukhin, Evgenii, ‘Antisotsium’, in: Valieva, Sumerki ‘Saigona’, pp. 168-169.

¹⁵ For information on the Religious-Philosophical Seminar see Savitskii, *Andegraund* and von Zitzewitz, *Poetry and the Leningrad Religious-Philosophical Seminar*, ch. 1.

The names listed above, alongside many others, comprise the canon into which the unofficial poets endeavoured to inscribe themselves. If we accept Mikhail Gronas's definition of the literary canon as 'institutionalized cultural memory',¹⁶ their attempts at becoming part of that canon can be read as an act of defiant self-assertion – when the powers that be factually denied them the right to call themselves poets, they retorted by claiming to belong among Russia's greatest poetic voices.

The Vertical of Time

The cult of the poet as a visionary who pays for his initiation with exclusion from society, which had its origin in Romanticism and thrived during the Silver Age, survived in Soviet Russia virtually unbroken. Theoretical preoccupations that were prominent in the West around this time, such as Roland Barthes' claim that texts exist independently from the author's persona and intentions,¹⁷ had little clout in Russia. On the contrary, the persona and fate of the author were inextricably entwined with the text and invested it with meaning. A writer in danger of persecution for his literary activity was a tragic figure, and his texts bore witness to his truth.¹⁸ Such an understanding of their role helped the unofficial poets justify and even idealise their social marginality. Moreover, as Stanislav Savitskii observed, their orientation towards literary heritage afforded them the role of conservative philologists trying to define and 'воссоздать

¹⁶ Gronas, Mikhail, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁷ As detailed in his 1967 essay 'The Death of the Author'. First published in *Aspen* No 5-6 (1967), available online on <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes>

¹⁸ In Russia, this model had flourished throughout the twentieth century, fuelled by the fact that many of the greatest poets fell victim to political repression. See Boym, Svetlana, *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 120 ff.

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ушедшую историческую действительность' ('recreate lost historical reality').¹⁹ The extensive orientation towards the past adds an additional nuance to the rapidly evolving myth of the underground poet as a tragic hero: he was the preserver of authentic literary culture at a time when this culture was under acute threat from a hostile environment.

The underground poets worked with that which Krivulin called 'счастливо обретенная вертикаль жизни' ('the happily found vertical of life'),²⁰ an understanding of time that is based on the internal affinity between different periods rather than chronology and thus allows for the coexistence of distant historical moments. In this vertical time the unofficial poets 'conversed' with long-dead predecessors they admired.²¹ The idea of mythical simultaneity in art, meaning that poets do not follow in one another's footsteps, but drink from the same source, has its origin in the Silver Age.²² Krivulin employs a similar model, although he places the emphasis on language itself rather than the 'spirit of poetry' as the nourishing and connecting source. This is his account of a literary epiphany that he had while reading Baratynskii:

Умерло время [...] И сразу изменился круг друзей, пространство
общения приобрело четко выраженное вертикальное измерение,

¹⁹ Savitskii, *Andegraund*, p. 119.

²⁰ Krivulin, Viktor, *Okhota na mamonta*, St Petersburg: BLITs, 1998, p. 8.

²¹ Examples in which Krivulin literally converses with dead poets include 'Ia Tiutcheva sproshu' ('Я Тютчева спрошу, в какое море гонит / облаком льда советский календарь?' ('I ask Tiutchev, into which sea with ice clouds / does the Soviet calendar drive us?')), in: Krivulin, V., *Stikhi*, 2 vols, Leningrad: Beseda, 1988, vol 1, p. 23; and 'Gorodskaiia progulka' ('совсем не тяжело восстать из немоты. [...] / Да, Боратынский, ты живешь' ('And he answered that / it was not at all hard to rise from muteness [...] Yes, Boratynskii, you are alive.')), *ibid.*, p. 9.

²² Boris Gasparov interprets this as an expression of the eschatological mood of Russian modernism: Gasparov, Boris, Hughes, Robert P. and Paperno, Irina (eds), *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 4 ff.

исключив многих, подавляющее большинство современников, но за то обретя – в качестве живых, постоянных собеседников – Тютчева и Данте, Баратынского и Чурилина, [...]. А рядом с ними – ничуть не умаляясь соседством с великими мастерами прошлого – совершенно по-иному зазвучали голоса моих друзей.²³

Time died [...] And immediately my circle of friends changed, the space of interaction acquired a clearly expressed vertical dimension that excluded many, in fact the overwhelming majority of my contemporaries, but in their place gained – in the form of living, permanent interlocutors – Tiutchev and Dante, Baratynskii and Churilin [...] And next to them – not in the slightest diminished by the vicinity of the great masters of the past – the voices of my friends sounded completely different.

For the underground poets the concept of vertical time provided a way, or rather a ladder, out of the stagnation of the 1970s. The ‘conversation’ with their role models, conducted through the writing of verse, allowed them to expand their (imaginary) audience and thus alleviate the burden of their marginality. In other words, it now mattered less that their present audience was limited to a narrow circle of acquaintances and their influence confined to their hometown. Vertical time means that they no longer created in isolation, but conceived of their writings while immersed in the Russian literary tradition, in the company of its greatest names, which gave them the opportunity to experience themselves as part of this tradition.

²³ Krivulin, V., *Okhota na mamonta*, pp. 7-8. This statement exhibits clear parallels to that of Brodsky reading Akhmatova and Auden, see, for example, Polukhina, V. (ed.), *Iosif Brodskii: bol'shaia kniga interv'iu*, Moscow: Zakharov, 2000, p. 385.

Intertextual Devices

Intertext, direct and indirect quotation, is a very common poetic device. For the Leningrad School poets it assumed special significance. Intertext, which helped them to weave their own literary creation into an existing web of texts, was their way of ‘conversing’ with their predecessors. Some of their chosen ‘interlocutors’, such as Pushkin, were established classics and canonical by Soviet standards. Other role models were marginal (Osip Mandelstam) or remained taboo (Nikolai Gumilev) in official culture, at least in the early 1970s. These writers, ‘addressed’ through intertext, made up the canon as the underground poets understood it, and it was into this ‘alternative’ canon that Leningrad unofficial writers aimed to inscribe themselves.

The unofficial poets evidently enjoyed dedicating their poems to either their ‘mentors’ from the classical tradition or their peers.²⁴ The prolific use of epigraphs is a related technique. Both devices are evident in the work of many modernist poets and as such constitute yet another link between the Silver Age and the late Soviet underground.²⁵ Mutual dedications are a safeguard against isolation – they inform the reader that the poet he is reading is part of a group whose members value each other’s work.²⁶ Dedications to fellow poets alongside dedications to classics validate un-

²⁴ Unless indicated otherwise all references are taken from the most complete available collections of the poets: Okhapkin Oleg, *Stikhi*, Leningrad: Beseda, 1989; Shvarts, Elena, *Sochineniia*, 5 vols, St Petersburg: Pushkinskii Fond, 2002-2013; Krivulin, Viktor, *Stikhi*, 2 vols, Paris: Beseda, 1988; Mironov, Aleksandr, *Izbrannoe: stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, St Petersburg: INAPRESS, 2002.

²⁵ Examples are Marina Tsvetaeva’s ‘Stikhi k Bloku’ and ‘Stikhi k Akhmatovoi’, part of her collection *Versty* (1916).

²⁶ Some poems are dedicated to important representatives of underground culture who were not poets. Two examples are Okhapkin’s dedications to the artist Mikhail Shemiakin (the poem ‘Sfinks’, *Stikhi*, p. 154, and the long poem-cycle ‘Dusha Peterburga’, http://www.religare.ru/2_82613.html#a101), and Elena Shvarts’s ‘Stvorki’ (part of ‘7 etazh. Vlianie luny’ in the long cycle ‘Lestnitsa s dyriavymi ploshchadkami’, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 81), dedicated to the philosopher and editor Tat’iana Goricheva.

official poets by implicitly placing them into the same space as the classics;²⁷ at the same time the unofficial poets invoked modernist poets who were becoming very popular among intellectuals with access to pre-revolutionary books and samizdat, but not necessarily in official culture. This technique raises the expectation in the reader that he should recognise the unknown addressee of a given dedication (or the quoted epigraph) with as much ease as he recognises the name or words of Pushkin or Mandelstam.²⁸

This use of dedications and epigraphs can be read as an attempt to break out of the self-referentiality imposed by cultural marginality. As Frank Kermode observed, texts do not enter the canon in isolation. The decisive moment is their position towards other texts, especially texts already in the canon.²⁹ The poets of the Leningrad School seem to have intuited this and brought themselves into an ideal entry position:

²⁷ Elena Shvarts seemingly ironises this device in the 21 poems which feature epigraphs that are either fictitious or quotations from her own work.

²⁸ Oleg Okhapkin makes it somewhat harder for his readers. While his dedications to and epigraphs from fellow underground poets stipulate the full name of the addressee, he habitually abbreviated the names of well-known predecessors, perhaps implying that the reader should be able to recognise the author by looking at the epigraph. This expectation may be justified: many of his epigraphs are among the best-known lines of Russian poetry (e.g. 'Naedine s dushoi' (*Stikhi*, p. 154) is preceded by the first line of Lermontov's 'Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu', attributed to 'M.L.'; lyric no. 7 of the narrative poem 'Vosvrashchenie Odisseia' (http://www.religare.ru/2_82613.html#a102) features the first line of Pushkin's 'Arion' ('Nas bylo mnogo na chelne'), attributed to 'A.P.'). Both Pushkin and Lermontov featured heavily in the Soviet school curriculum for rote learning (cf. Gronas, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory*, p. 89).

²⁹ 'One consequence of canonicity is that [...] each member of it fully exists in the company of others; one member nourishes or qualifies another, that as well as benefiting from the life-preserving attentions of commentary, each thrives in the propinquity of all': Kermode, Frank, *Pleasure and Change : The Aesthetics of Canon*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 33.

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they were a tightly knit group whose members continually referred to one another,³⁰ and they created a resonance between their own poems and texts that were widely recognised, in some cases by the Soviet literary authorities, as important milestones in the Russian poetic tradition.

Soviet literary policy from the mid-1920s onwards had led to an artificial rupture in literary history. The unofficial poets of the last Soviet decades were trying to bridge the resulting gap, rediscovering and incorporating the legacies of the Silver Age. In these circumstances, ‘anxiety of influence’ as defined by Harold Bloom was not a dominant factor in their attitude towards literary heritage, on the contrary. The immediate threat to their work was insignificance and oblivion, not being seen as derivative. This may well be one of the reasons why they overstressed, rather than downplayed, the formal and thematic elements they consciously inherited from their predecessors. Reconnection and continuity rather than emancipation was the main characteristic of their own relation to literary tradition; tradition was the anchor that kept them from being cast adrift in the cultural climate of the *zastoi* years.³¹

Soviet Russia in the 1970s was a literature-centric society. Educated people could be expected to know a significant amount of poetry by heart. State education certainly encouraged the rote learning of carefully vetted texts that were considered edifying; on the other hand, people who were trained in this way found it natural to

³⁰ Oleg Okhapkin’s long poem ‘Bronzovyi vek’ (*Blue Lagoon Anthology*, vol 4B, pp. 97-99) begins with a long list of fellow unofficial poets, evidently an attempt at establishing the voices of this ‘Bronze Age’, which was Okhapkin’s term for the literary revival of the post-Stalin era.

³¹ Joseph Brodsky is primarily referring to the horrors of Stalinism, but his words also apply to the effects of the 1917 revolution on literary culture: ‘We were beginning in an empty – indeed a terrifyingly wasted – place and [...] we aspired precisely to the re-creation of the effect of culture’s continuity, to the reconstruction of its forms and tropes, toward filling its few surviving, and often totally compromised, forms with our own new, or appearing to us as new, contemporary content’ (Brodsky, Joseph, ‘Uncommon Visage: The Nobel Lecture (1987)’, *On Grief and Reason*, London: Penguin, 1995, pp. 55-56).

memorise poems they cherished. Mikhail Gronas believes this factor even influenced the way in which poetry was written; according to him, Russian poetry adhered to traditional formal patterns for much longer than poetry in the West in order to be memorable.³² A poem whose author evidently knows and loves the same texts as the reader themselves can evoke an instantaneous feeling of recognition. And the Leningrad poets frequently alluded to texts that were part of the intelligentsia's collective cultural memory.

The following section constitutes an exercise in close reading, comparing how several unofficial poets adapt Russia's most unambiguously canonical poets: Alexander Pushkin. There are several reasons for choosing Pushkin in this place, as opposed to, say, Tsvetaeva or Mandelstam: Pushkin's stance as the Russian national poet is as uncontested as Shakespeare's standing in English literature,³³ and he remained canonical and one of the most widely-read poets throughout the Soviet age.³⁴ Conversely, most Silver Age poets were suppressed, with their work becoming available, in limited editions, only during or after the Thaw.³⁵ Pushkin was venerated already during

³² Gronas, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory*, p. 73.

³³ Paul Debreczeny argues, following Michael Malraux, that Russia's main concern ('anxiety') in the early nineteenth century was that of national identity, showing how Pushkin's elevation to a figure of national standing took place within this context: Debreczeny, Paul, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 225-226.

³⁴ Kelly, Catriona, *A Very Short Introduction to Russian Literature*, Oxford: OUP, 2001, uses Pushkin as the central reference point for Russian literary history. Chapter 3 addresses his canonisation in the Soviet era. For publication statistics of the early Soviet decades identifying Pushkin as the most widely published classical writer alongside Tolstoy, see Friedberg, Maurice, *Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets*, New York: Columbia UP, 1962, Appendix D, pp. 186 ff. Lovell, Stephen, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, discusses the promotion of the classics in the later Soviet period.

³⁵ The first Soviet edition of Mandelstam's poems in book form appeared in 1973. The re-publication of Tsvetaeva began with a selection in the Konstantin Paustovskii's miscellany *Tarusskie stranitsy* in 1961; a 300-page selected works appeared in the same year.

his lifetime, and over the course of the nineteenth century he acquired the reputation of being Russian literature's founding father. To give an example, Dostoevsky proclaimed that 'Пушкин есть пророчество и указание [...] не было бы Пушкина, не было бы и последовавших за ним талантов' ('Pushkin is prophecy and direction. If there had been no Pushkin the talents that followed him would not have existed either').³⁶ The Pushkin myth was to become one of the dominant cultural myths of the Silver Age.³⁷ As late as 1921 Alexander Blok found Pushkin to be the prototype of his own understanding of the poet as mystic seer.³⁸ Conversely, for the Futurists Pushkin embodied precisely that backward tradition they wished to overcome.³⁹ Pushkin remained canonical with readers as well as with writers. Whether they liked him or not, every writer of standing had to find their version of 'Moi Pushkin' ('My Pushkin'),⁴⁰ and this continued throughout the twentieth century.⁴¹

³⁶ Dostoevsky, Fedor, 'Pushkin', in *Dnevnik pisatel'ia*, St Petersburg: Azbuka, 1999, pp. 489, 502. This 'Pushkin Speech', given in 1880, consciously echoes Nikolai Gogol's words, from 'Neskol'ko slov o Pushkine' (1835), to the effect that 'Пушкин есть [...] может быть, единственное явление русского духа' ('It is possible that Pushkin [...] is the only manifestation of the Russian spirit') (cited *ibid.*, p. 489).

³⁷ The role of the Pushkin myth in the Silver Age is described in Gasparov, Hughes, and Paperno, *Cultural Mythologies*.

³⁸ In 'O naznachenii poeta', a speech given on the occasion of the 84th anniversary of Pushkin's death. First published in *Vestnik literatury*, 27/3, 1921.

³⁹ They threatened to 'throw him off the steamship of modernity', as stipulated in the manifesto, 'Poshchecchina obshchestvennumu vkusu', published as part of the eponymous first collection of the Cubo-Futurists in 1912. Reprinted e.g. in: Brodskii, N.L. and Sidorov, N.P. (eds.), *Literaturnye manifesty: ot simvolizma do 'Oktiabria'* Moskva: Afgraf, 2001, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁰ The title of an essay by Valerii Briusov, published in 1929; probably more often associated with Marina Tsvetaeva's eponymous essay from 1937.

⁴¹ Examples include Akhmatova's research pieces on Pushkin, including 'Kamennyi gost' Pushkina' (1947), Andrei Siniavskii's 'Progulki s Pushkinym' (1968), Andrei Bitov's novel *Pushkinskii dom* (1971).

As the supposed embodiment of the creative principle and the ‘spirit of poetry’, Pushkin was instrumental to the concept of vertical poetic time, which underpins the endeavour of the Leningrad School poets to write themselves into the classical tradition.⁴²

The presence of Pushkin is strongly felt in the work of all four poets under study here. He is the addressee of numerous dedications, his poems are frequently the source of epigraphs, and all poets regularly employ quotations, motifs, or thematic tropes borrowed from Pushkin.⁴³ Pushkin’s poem ‘Prorok’ (‘The Prophet’, 1826), which introduces the quintessential image of the poet-prophet, presents prophetic insight as an unasked-for gift that entails spiritual and physical suffering. The poem employs motifs from an Old Testament scene (Isaiah 6:6-7) such as the six-winged seraph, but adapts them to suit the poet’s agenda. Most importantly, the Old Testament seraph touches Isaiah’s mouth with a smouldering piece of coal in order to take away his sin; subsequently Isaiah volunteers to be God’s messenger. By contrast, Pushkin’s seraph places the burning coal into the poet-prophet’s chest, having torn out his heart, and exhorts him to ‘burn human hearts with the word’. ‘Prorok’ celebrates inspiration. The poet is singled out as special among his peers and his task identified as spiritual, though not necessarily religious. These traits, which had attracted the

⁴² A much more detailed list is provided in Sandler, Stephanie, ‘The Pushkin Myth in Russia’, in: Bethea, David (ed.), *The Pushkin Handbook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, pp. 403-423.

⁴³ This counting exercise is for illustration purposes only and concerns a) dedications and epigraphs b) quotation and evident allusion c) adaptation of a named poem or topic, the collections used for this study reveal: Okhapkin: seven direct references to Pushkin (12 references to classical and Silver Age writers, 22 references to peers), Shvarts: three references to Pushkin (eight to classics, 17 to peers), Krivulin: three Pushkin references, 14 to classics, six to peers) Mironov: three references to Pushkin (19 to classics; ten to peers).

Symbolists to Pushkin, were rediscovered by the neo-modernists⁴⁴ of the late Soviet underground. The Romantic myth of the poet-as-outsider-and-prophet was pivotal for the underground poets' concept of poetry and the role of the poet. If we agree with Mikhail Gronas's proposal to measure canonicity by the number of times a given text is alluded to, then 'Prorok' is possibly the most canonical Pushkin text for the Leningrad School.⁴⁵

Four Versions of 'Prorok'

Oleg Okhapkin

Oleg Okhapkin's conception of poetry was irreducibly religious. Poetry was if not Gospel, then at least Liturgy, a vehicle for both worship and preaching.⁴⁶ All his life Okhapkin worked in a field of tension between his literary and religious callings.⁴⁷ Pushkin's legacy provides lexicon and imagery that help mould the figure of the poet

⁴⁴ This is the categorisation employed by Aleksandr Zhitenev, author of the first systematic study on the poetics of the Leningrad school: Zhitenev, A., *Poeziia neomodernizma*: St Petersburg: Inapress, 2012.

⁴⁵ This statistical model for canonicity is proposed in Gronas, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory*, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Most succinctly formulated in an interview in 2004: 'Сейчас, когда открылось столько храмов, где звучит настоящая литургическая поэзия, мои стихи уже не так нужны' ('Now so many churches are open in which real liturgical poetry can be heard, thus my poems are no longer that important'): Pudovkina, E., '“Я поэт, в этом не моia вина”: интер'виу с Олегом Okhapkinym', *Professia*, 3/November 2004, <http://www.professia.info/mview.php?st=9> (accessed 9 April 2008).

⁴⁷ In her obituary, his widow, Tat'iana Koval'kova, identified these callings as ultimately irreconcilable: 'он был церковным человеком с детства, вот этот вот контраст, который требовал совсем другого — простоты и послушания — это было несовместимо с тем путем, который он избрал, как поэт'. ('He was a member of the church since childhood, and this is the contrast that required something completely different – simplicity and obedience – this was irreconcilable with the path he had chosen as a poet'): 'Tol'ko stikhi: pamiati Olega Okhapkina', <http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/468261.html>.

to this task. In ‘Voploshchenie’ (‘Incarnation’) we see key images of Pushkin’s proto-text reproduced almost literally:

Не музой и не демоном храним
Я принял в дар провидческое око,
Покров мой – шестикрылый серафим –
Ужасный гений древнего пророка

И оттого так лёгок мой ярем.
Я верую, что Дух владеет мною.⁴⁸

Preserved by neither muse nor demon / I accepted the gift of the
prophetic eye, / My cover is the six-winged seraph / The ancient
prophet’s terrible genius. / And this is why my pulse is light. / I
believe that the Spirit is guiding me.

Unlike Pushkin, Okhapkin calls the seraph a ‘cover’ or ‘protector’, here as well as in ‘Serafim khraniteliu’ (‘To the Protecting Seraph’, 1972)⁴⁹ and ‘Aleksandru Ozhiganovu’ (‘To Aleksandr Ozhiganov’) – an indication, perhaps, of the fact that Okhapkin construes poetic inspiration in more unambiguously positive terms, namely as the only thing that protects the poet’s spirit in his environment of ‘казенная пустота’ (‘banal emptiness’) where he is ‘дыханьем заражен чумных фабричных труб’ (‘infected by the breath of pestilential factory chimneys’).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Okhapkin, *Stikhi*, p. 29.

⁴⁹ This poem carries an epigraph from ‘Prorok’: ‘И шестикрылый серафим / на перепутье мне явился’ (ibid., p. 169-170).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

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In ‘Voploshchenie’, Okhapkin invokes and rejects the muse as the conventional source of poetic inspiration in favour of the gift of the ‘prophetic eye’. We know that Pushkin did not believe the task of the poet to be religious in nature; his emphasis is on the poet as a self-sacrificing individual whose inspiration comes from beyond his own person yet is deeply personal. In the light of what we know about Okhapkin’s conception of poetry, we can conclude that Okhapkin manipulates the purpose of Pushkin’s imagery to the effect that Okhapkin’s own poetry *is* religious prophecy.

The proliferation of Church Slavonic as well as mannerisms such as capitalising ‘Glagol’ (used in its archaic meaning of ‘word’) or indeed ‘Slovo’ can be read as evidence of Okhapkin’s endeavour to bring poetic language closer to the language of the divine liturgy described in note 46 above. The use of a capital letter indicates that Okhapkin’s poetic word simultaneously represents the Logos, that is, the originally creative Word of God which, according to John 1:1, became incarnate in Jesus Christ:

Возьми же сей Глагол и победи Им
Ничтожество твое, ничтоже – дрожь.⁵¹

Take now this Word and use It [Him] to vanquish / Your nothingness, the shivering is void.

But Okhapkin’s use of archaisms has literary as well as theological roots: ‘Prorok’ itself is replete with Slavonicisms and other archaisms, and Okhapkin’s use of ‘Glagol’ to exhort an Old Testament prophet distinctly echoes the final line of Pushkin’s famous poem, ‘Глаголом жги сердца людей’ (‘Burn the hearts of the peo-

⁵¹ ‘Ispytanie Iova’, http://www.religare.ru/2_82613.html#a103. Another example: ‘Одно еще оставил – дар, / то самое, с чего я гол, / Да тяжесть крыл, свободы жар, / Молитвы огненный Глагол’ (‘And he left something else, a gift / the reason why I am naked / The heaviness of wings, the heat of freedom, / The fiery Word of prayer’), ‘Tiazhelye kryl’ia’, *Stikhi*, p. 160.

ple with the word'). If indeed Okhapkin is following Pushkin here, his archaisms are at least as much a literary device as they are a token of religious mission. Read in this way, as allusions to Pushkin, Okhapkin's archaisms constitute one of the devices through which the poet claims his place in literary tradition.⁵²

Elena Shvarts

Elena Shvarts was adamant that she did not cite other poets, at least not without irony. She states that Pushkin is the source of most direct quotes we might find in her poems but insists that these 'coincidences' are accidental.⁵³ While her allusions are transparent, they are much more ambiguous in both imagery and potential intention than what we have seen in the case of Okhapkin.

In the poem 'Bokovoe zrenie pamiati' ('The Sideways Vision of Memory', 1985), a poem about inspiration, she harnesses elements of the Pushkin myth, dropping just enough thematically heavily associated terms in close vicinity to evoke the myth of the poet-prophet in the mind of the erudite reader:

А может быть, сама Нева
Ленивая приподнялась,
Мне вскрыла сбоку третий глаз
И заплескалась в головах.

⁵² Archaisms and Church Slavonic were used by the unofficial poets as part of a fashion for registers of the Russian language that were far removed from contemporary everyday use. This phenomenon has been researched in Zubova, Liudmila, *Sovremennaia russkaia poezii v kontekste istorii iazyka*, Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obzorenie, 2000. See pp. 155 ff. for an analysis of the use of 'glagol', including by Okhapkin.

⁵³ 'Чи незакавыченныя цитаты можна заметить в ваших стихах? – Скорее всего пушкинские, но только в ироническом смысле... Бывают какие-то совпадения, но это не мое дело их находить' ('Whom do you quote directly in your poems?' 'Pushkin, if anyone, but only in an ironic sense. [...] Coincidences do happen, but it's not my job to find them'): Interv'iu s V. Polukhinoi (1990)', in: Polukhina, V. (ed.), *Iosif Brodskii glazami sovremennikov. Kniga pervaiia (1987-1992)*, St Petersburg: Zvezda, 2006, p. 228.

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О злая! – это ты, Нева,
И ладожская твоя сила
Тот уголь с берега схватила
И втерла мне в висок слова.⁵⁴

But perhaps the lazy Neva / herself rose up and opened / from the
side my third eye/ and started splashing inside the heads. / Oh
evil one! That's you, Neva / and your strength from the Lake La-
doga / grabbed that piece of coal from the bank / and rubbed
words into my temple.

Shvarts, however, is not just alluding to this one poem. Rather, she invokes Pushkin as the founder of the Petersburg myth in literature. Quasi-anthropomorphic sinister forces, here evident in the actions of the river, have been a core characteristic in the literary representation of St Petersburg ever since the publication of Pushkin's 'Mednyi vsadnik' ('Bronze Horseman') in 1837. The one direct allusion to 'Prorok' here is the piece of coal through which inspiration is transmitted. 'Prorok' has its climax in the moment of inspiration and its consequence, i.e. the exhortation that the poet-prophet may go and tell. This is precisely where Shvarts digresses from the canonical text, never to return: in her poem, inspiration does not entail a clear-cut mission, and certainly no demand to preach. The coal is wielded not by a seraph, but by the Neva; the poem's focus is on the river, the source of poetic inspiration and of the Petersburg myth itself. Thus Shvarts adds poetic inspiration to the list of the supernatural forces inherent to the city. Inspiration is unpredictable and potentially fatal, and it will befall any (true) poet creating in Peter's city. Shvarts invokes the canonical texts in

⁵⁴ Shvarts, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 233.

order to bolster her personal myth, namely that she is a Petersburg poet and part of the great tradition.⁵⁵

Viktor Krivulin

Viktor Krivulin employed a very different strategy. His 1975 version of ‘Prorok’⁵⁶ is ostensibly a re-working of Pushkin’s text. Many elements are cited almost verbatim, including the title, but Krivulin inverts them in such a way that they verbalise his own preoccupation with the *unofficial* poet, a hounded figure vacillating between confidence and profound doubt in his abilities and mission. Unlike the prophet who never asked for his gift and feels awe at the demand it places on him, the underground poet yearns for a mission and the corresponding gift of appropriate speech: ‘Ниспошли пар пророческой речи! [...] [Д]ай мне хоть бормотанье!’ (‘Grant me the steam of prophetic speech! [...] Then give me at least a mutter!’).⁵⁷ It remains unclear whether his wish is granted and consequently whether his poetry can be called ‘inspired’ by the superior being to whom the poet addresses his plea.

Krivulin’s poem ‘Prorok’ exhibits traits of Lermontov’s and Pushkin’s works of the same title. While Pushkin primarily affirms the poet’s special mission, Lermontov focuses more on his social marginality. There is a certain formal affinity between Krivulin’s poem and Pushkin’s text: the poem consists of one single page-long stanza, which is uncharacteristic of Krivulin, who preferred much shorter stanzas. Yet Krivulin’s version is essentially a parody, ridiculing Pushkin’s pathos and negating the cen-

⁵⁵ For details on the Petersburg text see Toporov, V., *Peterburgskii tekst v russkoi literature*, St Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2003.

⁵⁶ Krivulin, *Stikhi*, vol. 1, p. 173. Not to be confused with the eponymous poem dating from the 1990s.

⁵⁷ Krivulin, ‘Vechera pod kreshchenie’, *Stikhi*, vol. 1, p. 95.

tral tenet of Lermontov's poem, namely the utter conviction of the poet that he is indeed chosen, regardless of other people's opinion.

'Prorok's' parodic nature becomes apparent when Krivulin's lyrical 'I' announces 'Я хотел кричать' ('I wanted to scream'), a desire that bears little resemblance to the spiritual agony of Pushkin's protagonist. Screaming instead of speaking (or writing, or singing) is the marker of this poet's voice. Initially his desire is foiled by the weightlessness of his voice which is goose-like ('но голос / был гусиным' ('But my voice / was that of a goose')). The image of the goose mocks Pushkin's winged seraph who visits the tormented poet in the wilderness. The remainder of the poem is a flurry of images derived from Pushkin and the New Testament. The poet meets God and is addressed in words that recall the ones used by Jesus towards a girl he resurrected (Mark 5:41: 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!') but he is not sent on a mission: 'И сказал Господь: / [...] что твое? Ты встанешь и пойдешь.' ('And the Lord said: / [...] what is yours? You will get up and walk'). Pushkin's Prophet has his own tongue forcibly removed; the case of Krivulin's protagonist is more serious: 'Я хотел кричать но рта / не было' ('I wanted to scream but I had / no mouth'). In the end his poet manages to exercise his voice: 'Вот я встал и вышел и кричал / словно камень, плавимый в аду' ('Then I got up and went out and screamed / as if I was a stone, smelted in hell').⁵⁸

These words might be an allusion to Jesus's words from the Gospel of Luke ('I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out', Luke 19:40). What is noteworthy is the total absence of inspiration – we are never told why the poet wants to scream or indeed what he has to say. Like Shvarts's poem discussed above, Krivulin's 'Prorok' contains enough unambiguous references to harness the considerable allusive power of the myth. However, what is marked in this case is the irony

⁵⁸ Krivulin, *Stikhi*, vol. 1, p. 173.

with which Krivulin distances himself from a stance that had become a somewhat tired cliché. And yet the myth helps him in his endeavour to define the position of the unofficial poet, the writer whose word-instrument has once and for all lost any claim to having the power to transform the world. The solemn pathos of the Romantic myth is replaced with a perpetual oscillation between ironic self-doubt and overblown self-confidence, yet the myth clearly provides the backbone of Krivulin's discourse, thus affirming the continuity, however compromised, between classical Russian poetry and his own age.

Alexandr Mironov

Aleksandr Mironov's approach was not so much an inversion of Pushkin's original tenets, but their *reductio ad absurdum*. Nevertheless, the Pushkinian myth of the poet preoccupied him intensely. 'Priroda delaet poetom' ('Nature Makes You a Poet', 1973) contains a whole series of Pushkinian elements which Mironov over-literalises to the point of rendering them absurd. The first line, 'Природа делает поэтом / когда в душе у вас кристалл' ('Nature makes you a poet / when there is a crystal in your soul'), is a good example; it grotesquely overdraws the image of the individually gifted outsider. Each subsequent image is similarly exaggerated: 'Кусает грудь ему химера / И некому ему помочь' ('A chimera is tearing at his breast / And there is no one to help him'). The chimera is an ugly caricature of the majestic seraph (and also of course a product of the imagination) which 'bites' the poet's chest rather than replacing his own heart with a new heart that is brimming over with inspiration. Like Pushkin's 'Prorok', this poet is suffering. However, the root cause is neither spiritual yearning, nor, as in the case of Krivulin's prophet, awareness of his own powerlessness. Rather, he is suffering because of yearnings which highbrow culture despises as base animal instincts and Christianity identifies as cardinal sins, namely gluttony and lust:

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Поэт в отчаяньи трепещет
Ему соблазном – колбаса
Ему химера – дева блещет
Распоясав пояса.⁵⁹

The poet trembles in despair / he is tempted by a sausage / a girl
taking off her garters / flashes past like a chimera.

While Pushkin also wrote about the poet as ‘weak-spirited’ when uninspired (in the poem ‘Poet’ (‘The Poet’, 1827), written in the same metre as ‘Priroda delaet poetom’), he does not depict him as ridiculous. Moreover, Pushkin’s poet is at the mercy of a divine imperative to create. Whenever he receives inspiration, he is transformed from a mere mortal into an elevated, noble and solitary being. Not so Mironov’s poet. In the final stanza his sexual desire is fulfilled. He screams and moans with lust while caressing the object of his desires. But the line ‘напишет пальцами стихи’ (‘he writes poems with his fingers’) is ambivalent, as it alludes to the poet’s original craft – after all, this purports to be a poem about poetry. It seems that the statement from the first line has come full circle – this poet owes his skill not to divine inspiration, but to ‘base’ nature, namely his carnal instincts.

This poem is typical of Mironov, who shunned meaning in the conventional sense in favour of the absurd. The constituent elements of the Romantic myth of the poet are mentioned; moreover, it can be argued that the poem’s main question concerns the source of poetic inspiration. Yet the conclusion is incongruous – he refuses to formulate any clear-cut mission for the poet apart from eating, drinking and being merry, ambitions not traditionally associated with poetry. Mironov undermines the Romantic myth’s central preoccupation with the purpose of literary activity much

⁵⁹ Mironov, *Izbrannoe*, p. 4.

more radically than his peers under study here: 'Пиши мой гений, сердцу моему [...] / Ужь коль не ты, кто нам поможет [...] / И смысл последний упразднить' ('Write to my heart my genius [...] / if not you then who will help us [...] / to abolish even the last bit of meaning').⁶⁰

This poet has an urgent mission, but it is no longer prophecy, the proclamation of a message beyond poetry. The only mission of Mironov's poet is 'труд творения слов' ('the labour of creating words')⁶¹ – writing itself, no matter what the meaning behind the words, or whether they have any meaning at all.

The underground poets engaged with the enduring cultural trope of the poet as the chosen one through their characteristic irony, vacillating between robust confidence in their vocation and a playful inferiority complex towards historical periods that were culturally more fertile than their own.⁶² Pushkin's 'Prorok' helped Okhapkin affirm his religious mission and supported Shvarts's claim to the status of Petersburg poet. Krivulin entered into ironic dialogue with him, and Mironov reduced him to absurdity. On the one hand the myth of the Prophet was a well-worn literary cliché, on the other 'Prorok' remained a text that loudly hailed the primacy of inspiration and originality for art. For Leningrad's unofficial poets the question of the poet's role was highly topical, and their sustained preoccupation with 'Prorok' harnessed the poem's considerable allusive power.⁶³ By reworking this foundational text they affirmed the continuity,

⁶⁰ 'Pishi, moi genii, serdtsu moemu' (1972), Mironov, *Izbrannoe*, p. 53.

⁶¹ 'Puteshestvie' (1976), Mironov, *Izbrannoe*, p. 170.

⁶² In Viktor Krivulin's 1972 poem 'Deti polukul'tury' ('Children of Half-Culture') (*Stikhi*, vol 1, p. 44) this inferiority complex is expressed through the image of the poet and his contemporaries as children, denouncing the culture of which they are part as not fully-fledged.

⁶³ For an assessment of the early tradition of the poet as prophet see Davidson, Pamela, 'Between Derzhavin and Pushkin: The Development of the Image of the Poet as a Prophet in the Verse of Zhukovsky, Glinka, and

however compromised, between the Romantic understanding of the poet and their own situation.

Canon-Making Structures

Even in the West the canon is not primarily made by readers, but by editors, critics, and academics.⁶⁴ This was even truer in the Soviet Union with its extremely institutionalised literary process. And the alternative structures created by unofficial writers were not limited to channels for the distribution of poetry, but included the vital canon-making institutions of literary criticism and publishing ventures that supported their 'house authors'. The underground writers were, in many respects, emulating the techniques routinely employed by official culture. This preoccupation with institutions, and documentation in the form of journals, conferences etc., is rare for a counter-culture.⁶⁵ However, while the methods of (self-)canonisation resembled official practice, the subject matter was necessarily different. There exists a noticeable tension between the pathos of the quasi-official practices and the self-referentiality and neces-

Kiukhelbeker', in: O'Neil, Catherine, Boudreau, Nicole and Krive, Sarah (eds), *Poetics, Self, Place: Essays in Honor of Anna Lisa Crone*, Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2007, pp. 182-214; Davidson, P., 'The Validation of the Writer's Prophetic Status in the Russian Literary Tradition: From Pushkin and Iazykov through Gogol to Dostoevsky', *Russian Review*, 62/2003, 508-36.

⁶⁴ The 'educational' theory of canon formation is detailed in: Guillory, John, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

⁶⁵ The journal *Chasy* was founded as an institution. Its founder, Boris Ivanov (1928-2015), envisaged that his journal would provide structure for the unofficial cultural process: Ivanov, Boris, *Istoriia Kluba-81*, St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Ivana Limbakha, 2015, pp. 32, 36. This endeavour was successful: 80 issues of *Chasy* appeared between 1976-1990. In 1978, the editors of *Chasy* instigated the Andrei Bely Prize, the first independent literary prize, which is still being awarded. In 1979, they organised two conferences for unofficial writers. For summary details see *Samizdat Leningrada*, pp. 420-421 and 413-414. Members of the editorial board of *Chasy* were instrumental in the foundation of *Klub-81*, the KGB-sanctioned association offering some degree of legitimate space to uncensored literature in the early 1980s.

sarily limited audience of the underground. To give an example, the endorsement of a text by a well-known writer and/or critic can promote a poet among readers by assuring them that his/her texts conform to the standards of literature familiar to that reader. If done among close acquaintances, as was the case in the Leningrad unofficial sphere, endorsement is often little more than self-promotion with the help of another person. Nevertheless, it can be very effective advertising. A variation of the same technique we see when a writer himself cites the approval of a celebrated writer or anonymous admirer. For illustration purposes, here is Oleg Okhapkin's account of his encounter with Joseph Brodsky, probably the most famous unofficial poet, shortly before the latter's exile:

[Бродский] пригласил меня к себе домой, прочитал мои стихи и сказал: «Олег, вы действительно пишете хорошие стихи, и если это будет продолжаться, то через двадцать лет Нобелевская премия будет ваша». Вероятно, он уже тогда думал о Нобелевской премии, потому что ровно через двадцать лет сам ее получил. Так мы познакомились и стали дружить.⁶⁶

[Brodsky] invited me home, read my poems and said: 'Oleg, you really write good poems, and if you continue to do so, the Nobel Prize will be yours in twenty years time'. He probably was thinking about the Nobel Prize already then, because exactly twenty years later he received it himself. This is how we met and our friendship began.

It is impossible to establish now whether Brodsky really spoke these words. Perhaps the irony that seems to speak through them is retrospective and Okhapkin's own. While his friend received the Nobel Prize and became United States Poet Laureate,

⁶⁶ Okhapkin, Oleg, 'Oдна из легенд "Saigona" (1988)', Valieva Iu. (ed.), *Sumerki 'Saigona'*, p. 141.

Okhapkin's further career was marred by mental ill health and multiple stays in psychiatric hospitals, and his work remains little published to date.⁶⁷ What is clear is that Okhapkin himself publicised his acquaintance with Brodsky, and the latter's endorsement of his work, in the 1970s, immortalising the encounter in the poem 'Iosifu Brodskomū' ('To Joseph Brodsky', 1970).⁶⁸ Others picked the story up,⁶⁹ and its enduring appeal is apparent from the fact that several Leningrad poets reiterated it in their obituaries when Okhapkin died in 2008.⁷⁰ The technique of mutual endorsement is employed by the former members of the underground to the present day, even beyond the death of an individual member. For example, the critic and editor Andrei Ar'ev proclaimed: 'Все наше поколение оправдано бытием двух поэтов огромных – Кривулина и Охепкина' ('Our entire generation is justified by the existence of two great poets, Krivulin and Okhapkin').⁷¹ I would contend that it is difficult to imagine a statement by somebody without underground experience calling Krivulin, and even more so the hardly published Okhapkin, the defining poets of the generation.⁷² Just how much seeking and citing the approval of others was second nature for the unofficial poets can be seen from the adolescent diaries of Elena Shvarts, published after

⁶⁷ Okhapkin's widow, Tat'iana Koval'kova, has begun publishing thematic volumes of his poetry: *Liubovnaia lirika*, St Petersburg: Russkaia kul'tura, 2013 and *Filosofskaia lirika*, St Petersburg: Russkaia kul'tura, 2014. A third volume is in print.

⁶⁸ Okhapkin, *Stikhi*, p. 53.

⁶⁹ In the version of David Dar', who fostered Okhapkin's career, it sounds like an episode from the life of a saint, cf. Dar', David, 'Leningrad, sud'ba, poet', *Grani*, 110/1978: 48.

⁷⁰ Cf. the contributions of Andrei Ar'ev and Tamara Bukovskaia in 'Tol'ko stikhi: Pamiati Olega Okhapkina', <http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/468261.html>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ar'ev, who has been co-editor of the liberal journal *Zvezda* since 1991, was one of those who straddled the divide between official and unofficial literature during Soviet times. He published in the official press, but also actively participated in samizdat.

her death in 2010: ‘Недавно была с Ю. А. в гостях у двух старушек. Им очень нравятся мои стихи. Пророчили славу’ (‘Not long ago Yu. A. and I went to see two old ladies. They love my poems. They prophesied I would be famous’).⁷³

Several prominent members of the Leningrad school occupied key positions in the underground’s canon-making structures. Viktor Krivulin and Sergei Stratanovskii, for example, were not just poets, but also erudite scholars and prolific literary critics, as well as journal editors.⁷⁴ Their critical texts concerned the great writers of the past as well as their peers. The writers considered worthy of study by the underground poets were naturally not the same people favoured by the Soviet establishment.⁷⁵ The Soviet establishment ignored the samizdat poets and continued to discuss writers of the Silver Age in a narrow ideological vein.⁷⁶ Samizdat journals had always published criticism, but newer journals founded towards the end of the 1970s placed additional

⁷³ Shvarts, Elena, ‘Dnevnik’, *NLO* 115/2012, 261. In the same diary she speaks of her desire to be like Tsvetaeva and diagnoses an affinity between herself and her heroine: ‘Как Цветаева буду. Была б она жива, она бы поняла меня’ (‘I will be like Tsvetaeva. If she was alive, she would understand me’): *ibid*, p. 269.

⁷⁴ A list of their criticism can be found under their biographical entries in *Samizdat Leningrada*. Both published most of their criticism under pseudonym, Krivulin as A. Kalomirov and Stratanovskii as N. Golubev.

⁷⁵ Considering only 37 and *Chasy*, Silver Age poets discussed critically include Pasternak, Mandelstam, Annenskii, Khodasevich, Vvedenskii, and Bely. Most criticism concerns contemporary underground poets, including Joseph Brodsky, who had emigrated by the time both journals were set up. The only contemporary official poet discussed is Aleksandr Kushner in *Chasy* 22. The tables of contents of both journals, and the journals themselves, are now available online (see <http://arch.susla.ru/index.php/>).

⁷⁶ We find a particularly salient example in the essays published in the official press on the occasion of the centenary of Alexander Blok in 1980. Blok’s writings had never been suppressed in the same way as those of Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva or Khlebnikov. Nevertheless, by 1980 the official critics writing for *Novyi mir* and other journals still made every effort to interpret the mystical Symbolist’s work as primarily civically minded. See the introduction to the materials published on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of A. Blok, in *Novyi mir*, 11/1980, 224. I have written on the Leningrad underground’s reaction to the Blok centenary in ‘Reader Questionnaires in Samizdat Journals: Who Owns Alexander Blok?’, in: Furst, Juliane and McLellan, Josie (eds), *Dropping out of Socialism*, Lanham, Md: Lexington, 2016, pp. 107-127.

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emphasis on this genre, a fact that is reflected in their titles, which all feature the word ‘criticism’: *Obvodnyi kanal: literaturno-kriticheskii zhurnal* (1981-1993); *Dialog: zhurnal kritiki i polemiki* (1979-1981); *Severnaia pochta: zhurnal stikhov i kritiki* (1979-1981). Leningrad unofficial literature was now a mature literary process that had developed the necessary tools for self-reflection.⁷⁷

Just as in the realm of official literature, journal editors performed the functions of curators who granted or denied others the opportunity to publish. Several members of the Leningrad school served as editors, and some accumulated considerable power by sitting on the editorial board of several periodicals, either simultaneously or consecutively. Outstanding among these were, once again, Viktor Krivulin, the co-founder and literary editor of *37* and editor-in-chief of *Severnaia pochta*, and Sergei Stratanovskii, who was involved in *Chasy*, *Dialog*, *Obvodnyi kanal* and *Klub-81*.⁷⁸ It has always been common in Russia for writers to edit literary journals, from Alexander Pushkin, who started publishing *Sovremennik* in 1836, to the poet Aleksandr Tvardovskii, who served as editor-in-chief of *Novyi mir* in 1950-1954 and 1958-1970. However, it is remarkable just how many times the samizdat poet-editors published themselves or each other, and the figures are even more striking when we count not just their poetry, but also their critical and essay pieces, including those written under

⁷⁷ Fine examples of literary scholarship in the underground include the articles by Kalomirov, A [Krivulin, V.], ‘Dvadtsat’ let noveishei russkoi poezii’, *Severnaia pochta*, 1-2/1979, in which Krivulin confidently maps out the place unofficial poetry occupies within twentieth-century literary history, arguing for continuities between Modernism and 1970s poetry and elaborating on the renewal of poetic language after 1960. Boris Groys produced one of the first theoretical discussions of Conceptualism in his now iconic article ‘Moskovskii romanticheskii kontseptualizm’, first published in *37*, 15/1978, pp. 51-66.

⁷⁸ Oleg Okhapkin was literary editor of *Obshchina*, of which only one issue was published before its editorial board was arrested or dispersed by the KGB.

pseudonyms.⁷⁹ There are two ways of interpreting this phenomenon, and they are not mutually exclusive. Firstly, it is an indicator of the self-referentiality of the literary underground. Secondly, it is evidence of the endeavour of the unofficial poets to be ‘respectable’ poets, i.e. published and reviewed by others.

Unofficial poets put their expertise with regard to each other’s work to good use in the post-Soviet realm, effectively deciding which names would come to the attention of a broader audience that included scholars. The first officially published critical volumes on the literary underground were, without fail, compiled and edited by the stalwarts of samizdat criticism of the 1970s-1980s, from the modest conference volume *Samizdat* (1993)⁸⁰ to the seminal reference work *Samizdat Leningrada*,⁸¹ published a whole decade later, and the more literature-specific miscellany *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury*.⁸² By compiling these trailblazing works, the samizdat critics discussed here almost certainly directed the attention of the younger Russian and foreign researchers who have been studying samizdat poetry since rough-

⁷⁹ Cross-referencing only Krivulin and Stratanovskii for journals in which they held editorial posts: Krivulin published poetry in two out of 21 issues of *37*, in one out of eight issues of *Severnaia pochta*; also in seven out of 80 issues of *Chasy*, four out of 19 issues of *Obvodnyi kanal*; also he published literary criticism under the pseudonyms of A. Kalomirov or A. Berezhnov in four issues of *37*, one issue of *Severnaia pochta*, four issues of *Chasy* and four issues of *Obvodnyi kanal*. Stratanovskii published poetry in one issue of *37*, one issue of *Severnaia pochta*, five issues of *Chasy*, and four issues of *Obvodnyi kanal* and literary criticism under the pseudonym of N. Golubev in one issue of *37*; with ten separate publications in *Obvodnyi kanal*.

⁸⁰ Dolinin, V. and Ivanov, B. (eds), *Samizdat po materialam konferentsii ‘30 let nezavisimoi pechati: 1950-80 gody’*, S.-Peterburg, 25-27 apreliia 1992, St Petersburg: NITs ‘Memorial’, 1993.

⁸¹ Severiukhin, Dolinin, Ivanov and Ostanin, *Samizdat Leningrada*.

⁸² Ivanov, B. and Roginskii, B. (eds), *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury*, St Petersburg: DEAN, 2000.

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ly 2000 towards their own circles, thus shaping the still very fluid canon of recent Russian poetry.⁸³

The role of Russian émigré editors deserves special mention here. They were often the first to publish a given writer in a print edition. Of particular importance for the Leningrad scene was Tat'iana Goricheva, Krivulin's then wife, hostess of the Religious-Philosophical Seminar and co-founder and editor of the journal 37. After her forced emigration in 1980s she set up a publishing house in Paris, called Beseda, which specialised in publishing tamizdat. It was this venture which introduced many unofficial Leningrad poets to a wider international public; Goricheva thus became an early catalyst for the canonisation of the Leningrad underground,⁸⁴ rivalled maybe only by the monumental multi-volume endeavour of Konstantin Kuzminskii and Grigorii Kovalev, *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry*, for many years the largest sources of samizdat poetry and supplementary materials.

The ubiquity of the techniques described above illustrates the claim staked by unofficial poets to inclusion into the literary canon, and to the self-confidence, however brittle, with which they claimed their place alongside Pushkin, Mandelstam, and others. It is also a device that demonstrates the underground poets' erudition and delineates the target audience, as only those with similar reading tastes, and a similar erudition, will understand this poetry in full. This target audience was not the Soviet mass readership, and the canon into which the unofficial poets aimed to inscribe themselves was elitist. And yet the Russian canon as it is today is close to, if more ambivalent and complex than, the one favoured by the underground.

⁸³ Cf. note 3.

⁸⁴ Beseda produced 30 issues of the eponymous literary journal. More importantly, it published single author collections of the Leningrad samizdat poets, including the first collections of Elena Shvarts and Oleg Okhapkin. In the case of Krivulin and Okhapkin, their respective *Stikhi*-volumes published by Beseda in 1988 and 1989 respectively remain their fullest collections to date.

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THE 'COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP' OF IL'IA KUTIK AND HOMER

The 'Complicated Relationship' of Il'ia Kutik and Homer

At one point in his postmodern epic poem *Epos (Epic)*, Il'ia Kutik declares: 'u menia s Gomerom slozhnye otnosheniia!' ('I have a complicated relationship with Homer!').¹ There is perhaps some irony intended, since Homer is the literary model that Kutik places highest, and most constantly before himself in his writing, but there is also some truth in the statement, as this article will explore. It will follow the shifts in Kutik's reception and representation of Homer in his poetry from his first work *Oda na poseshchenie Belosaraiskoi kosy, chto na Azovskom more (Ode Upon Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit, Which is on the Sea of Azov, 1980-1984, henceforth Oda)*, through his lyric collections *Luk Odisseia (Odysseus' Bow)* and *Persidskie pis'ma, ili vtoraia chast' knigi Smert' Tragedii, vykhodiashchaia pervoi (Persian Letters, or the second part of the book "The Death of Tragedy", issued first, 1993-1999, henceforth Persidskie pis'ma)*, to his epic *Epos*. Throughout, how Kutik portrays his relationship with Homer reflects his current approach to his own poetry and its genre.

Kutik chooses a metaphor from a moment in Homer's *Odyssey* that holds a key position in his work to describe his poetry as syncretising, expansive, yet integral:

a poem [...] is that arrow from Odysseus' bow which passes untouched
through all the parts (each strophe is a ring) and hits the target. [...]

¹ Kutik, Il'ia, *Epos*, Moscow, Nauka, 2010, p. 125. All translations my own.

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The rings comprise *all* cultures – Hellas, Rome, Judea, Byzantium...
'Air' [...] is taken from each of them; it's joined to the sharp air whistle of flight.²

Kutik sees classical antiquity as the pinnacle of inherited culture, and the classical, Homeric epic as the ultimate unifying, transcending genre. Connection of disparate parts of human culture into a unified whole certainly is characteristic of Kutik's poetry, which is conspicuously and densely citational. His poems take place on a sort of poetically levelled referential plane, where various registers and styles of Russian poetic speech, past and present, and elements from world history, literature, and myth mingle and flow uninterrupted one into another. The effect – the integration of antiquity with modernity and many eras in between – creates a picture of a present both formed and informed by the past. An apt description for Kutik is an 'archaist', writing in a style which 'respects the past sufficiently to allow both the modern and the classical to sound simultaneously, in a kind of witty contrapuntal dialogue'.³ Kutik identifies himself by Mikhail Epstein's classification, as a Metarealist, belonging to a movement characterised by a strong interest in inherited culture: 'Metarealism seeks out true value by turning to eternal themes or the arch-images of contemporary themes [...] Its material is nature, history, art, and "high" culture'.⁴ However, although such 'high-brow' references do have a prominent place in Kutik's poetry, his catholic taste in citation and grounding in contemporaneity causes Epstein to designate his style as 'pre-

² Kutik, Il'ia, *Hieroglyphs of Another World: On Poetry, Swedenborg, and Other Matters*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2000, pp. 5–6.

³ Wachtel, Andrew, 'The Youngest Archaists: Kutik, Sedakova, Kibirov', in: Sandler, Stephanie (ed.), *Rereading Russian Poetry*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 272.

⁴ Epstein, Mikhail, Genis, Aleksandr and Vladiv-Glover, Slobodanka, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, New York: Berghahn, 1999, p. 107.

sentism, or “the poetry of presence”, “the poetry of the present moment”⁵. This manifests itself both in his poetry, with its plethora of references to modern popular culture, and in the theory behind his poetry, which he has drawn, apparently quite consciously, from reaction against and emulation of his immediate predecessors, analysis of the state of contemporary Russian literature, and interaction with his fellow metarealists.

Kutik's abiding ambition towards epic is closely tied to his lifelong interest in Homer.⁶ He continues his metaphor of a poem as Odysseus' arrow by linking it to his early urge to write epic (in an odic form):

An attempt (a personal one) is my ‘Ode on Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit on the Sea of Azov’.

This (in the ode and in general) is, for me, a solution to the problem of the Whole, of nostalgia in an epic key.⁷

He himself sees how emulation of Homeric epic stayed with him from *Oda* through to *Epos*:

I built for myself quite early the model of the line of those epics that, so to speak, have authorship [...] Homer, Dante, and Ezra Pound – ‘Cantos’ [...] it's definitely the attempt to create something that is beyond what is I, that is bigger than the person who writes. [...] I always

⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

⁶ Kutik, Il'ia, Interview with Georgina Barker, Evanston, Ill., 2014.

⁷ Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, p. 6.

imagined that, OK, if it's not a Homer, I can create something equal to Homeric for myself.⁸

External circumstances have played a part in the complications of Kutik's relationship with Homer. His choice of form for *Oda* (and resulting portrayal of Homer therein) stemmed from a reaction against the prevailing lyric mode of the previous poetic generation in Russia.⁹ His subsequent turn to lyric forms (and changed portrayal of Homer therein) coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union – itself an epic project – and his ultimately permanent move to the West; his collection *Luk Odisseia* would suggest that these events are linked. His epic poem *Epos* is both the continuation of Kutik's original epic intent in *Oda*, and part of a wider trend in modernism and postmodernism towards long narrative poems.¹⁰ The endurance of Kutik's will to write Homerically must also be connected to the fact that 'the long poem [...] has historically served as the measure of the height of a poet's ambition; undertaking to write one amounted to a declaration of one's designs on canonical status'.¹¹

Yet Homer stays with Kutik regardless of whether he is attempting epic or not – he adapts his Homer to the form of the moment.

Like a Big Fish in an Ancient Sea; or Stepping Stones towards Homer in *Oda*

Kutik's first work, *Oda*, concerns the building and breaking of a great wave over the Belosaraisk Spit, a peninsula at the bottom of Crimea jutting out into the Black Sea.

⁸ Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

⁹ Kutik, Il'ia, *The Ode and the Odic: Essays on Mandelstam, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva and Mayakovsky*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994, p. 16.

¹⁰ McHale, Brian, *The Obligation toward the Difficult Whole: Postmodernist Long Poems*, Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2004, *passim*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

The setting, which was in the part of the Soviet Union with closest ties to Ancient Greece and Rome,¹² also gives rise to the attendant 'characters' to the 'plot' – sea creatures mingle with classical allusions. Wachtel designates *Oda* a 'neoclassical dialogue', in which the 'new' and the 'classical' 'sound simultaneously, in a kind of witty contrapuntal dialogue'.¹³ *Oda* is a formally faithful imitation of an eighteenth-century Russian ode, written in 'the ten-line stanza, the rhyme scheme (aBaBccDeeD), and the metre (iambic tetrameter) that Lomonosov used in all his solemn odes'.¹⁴ But it is also Kutik's first attempt at an epic poem: 'our own form of epic [...] mine was [...] my "Ode". In the course of writing this work, I began to feel the necessity to prove [...] that the odic genre is both the Russian epic past and epic genre'.¹⁵ Although the ode does retain associations for Kutik with the classical tradition, he sees it as a primarily Russian genre, embodied by Derzhavin, Lomonosov, and other such poets of Russia's eighteenth-century odic tradition, rather than by Horace (in *Oda*, at least) and classical antiquity. Kutik's conception of epic, as opposed to the ode, is definitely classical: he refers to Nikolai Gnedich's translation of the *Iliad* to illustrate the 'epicness' of the odic poetry of Derzhavin and Mayakovsky, and to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for Tsvetaeva's.¹⁶ Kutik's ode expresses its epicness, and its classicalness – neither of which are borne out by its strict eighteenth-century Russian odic form – through references to Homer.

When writing about the ode, Kutik connects the foundational role of eighteenth-century ode-writers Derzhavin and Lomonosov for Russian literature with that

¹² Kalb, Judith E., *Russia's Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890-1940*, Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, p. 9.

¹³ Wachtel, 'Youngest Archaists', p. 286.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁵ Kutik, *Ode and the Odic*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 174–175 179–180, 183–184, 197, 201, 130–131.

of Homer for literature in general: ‘Derzhavin forms the same universal past (“first source”) for Russian poetry as Homer did for world poetry’:¹⁷

А под напудренным париком старился череп осьмнадцатого столетия, [...] грозил расколоться как череп Зевса, из которого в полном вооружении вышла на свет Афина. Не то же ли произошло и с эпическим космосом Гомера, распавшимся на миры великих античных трагиков, лириков (в частности, родоначальников оды Пиндара) и даже – Вергилия? [...] великий гнедичевский перевод «Илиады», тесно связанный с открытиями русского одического классицизма, ведь именно на его языке заговорил по-русски Гомер, оказав столь потрясающее воздействие на судьбу всей последующей нашей литературы!¹⁸

But under [Lomonosov’s] powdered wig the aging cranium of the eighteenth century [...] threatened to split open like Zeus’ skull, out of which emerged Athena in full armour. Did not Homer’s epic cosmos fare likewise, breaking up into the worlds of the great ancient tragedians, lyric poets (ancestors, amongst others, of Pindar’s ode), and even Virgil? [...] Gnedich’s great translation of the *Iliad* was closely linked with the breakthroughs in Russian odic classicism, for it was with his voice that Homer first spoke in Russian – with such staggering effects for all subsequent Russian literature!

The prominence of Homer in *Oda* is to be expected, given the poem’s joint odic and epic ambition, and the fact that it is an attempt at a foundational text for both

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁸ Kutik, Il’ia, ‘Slovo ob ode’, *Literaturnaia ucheba*, 6/1983, 149.

Kutik's œuvre and his era. But Kutik's attitude to Homer's influence on his own poetry is more complex than simple emulation. When planning his ode Homer was both the model for his epic approach and an overshadowing predecessor: 'ia i reshil sozdat' svoi sobstvennyi kontekst. To est', vyiti iz situatsii "kak" Gomer i – odnovremenno – poslegomerovskaia poeziia. To est' sozdat' etot samyi bol'shoi plan (epos)' ('so I decided to create my own context. To escape the situation of writing poetry that is simultaneously "like" Homer yet also post-Homeric. That is, to create that same big plan (epic)').¹⁹ Some of Kutik's ambivalence can be seen in his placement of Homeric references within *Oda* and the attitude he displays towards Homer in the final stanza.

Having alluded to Euripides in the very first stanza and Ovid in the third stanza, Kutik introduces Homeric references only in the final third of *Oda*, at its most dramatic, violent – epic – point. In the build-up to the climax of *Oda* Kutik unleashes the most recognisable weapon in the epic arsenal: the Homeric simile. One accompanies the wave at its greatest height in stanzas 42-43; one when it hangs suspended in its fall to earth in 45-47; and one during its final union with the land in 51-52. Each instance is expressed in the conventional Homeric wording of 'kak...tak' ('just as...so'). Kutik is very aware that he is employing Homeric similes, clearly following – or subverting – the rules of the form. As in Homer, Kutik's similes come at a crucial point in the text, and draw attention to it; they are similarly expansive, and prolong the already prolonged breaking of the wave; they take the reader away from the events of the narrative.

Oda's final simile is the most typically Homeric. The epic meeting of land and wave conjures up a distinctly unepic comparison: 'i kak, kogda ot staroi pyli / kover

¹⁹ Quoted in Babil'skii, Dmitrii, 'Sny-podstrochniki', *Topos*, 2003, <http://www.topos.ru/article/1231/> (accessed 30 October 2013).

vytriakhivaiut' ('and just as when old dust / is shaken out of a rug') (54).²⁰ This follows the Homeric convention in which the basis of the simile is so far removed from its source as to be incongruous: 'juxtaposing "low" or unheroic similes with heroic or dignified action in the narrative [...] creates a powerful tension between the normal or everyday experiences described in the simile, and the extraordinary or shocking experiences of the hero'.²¹ A similar instance occurs in *Iliad* 12:433-435, comparing the Greeks' tenacity in battle to a woman spinning. Yet Kutik is aware that his poem is *not* the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, and plays with this. In Homer similes usually derive from the natural world to contrast with men battling, whereas Kutik's work is already about the natural world; he therefore inverts the traditional Homeric simile, and compares the epic clash of natural elements with Homeric warfare. The first group of similes in stanza 42 concludes with a comparison of the giant fish with a bow: 'a telo, vygnutoe v muke, / s khvostom somknulos', – tak na luke / natiagivaiut tetivu' ('but its body, curved in torment, / joined up with its tail – just as a bow / is strung and drawn') (45). This refers to Homer's famous simile where Odysseus strings his bow in *Odyssey* 21. Kutik thus associates the awesome destructive power of Odysseus' bow with the fish. This simile continues beyond the fresh simile in the ensuing verse, as the fish/bow lets loose a cry/arrow: 'strela shal'nogo krika / pomchalas' s Iuga na Vostok' ('the stray cry's arrow / sped from South to East') (46). Kutik marks the central of his three similes as Homeric, directly referencing the *Iliad*:

²⁰ All Russian excerpts in this section are from Kutik, Il'ia, *Ode on Visiting the Belosaraisk Spit on the Sea of Azov* / *Oda na poseshchenie Belosaraiskoi kosy, chto na Azovskom more*, trans. Kit Robinson, New York: Alef Books, 1995.

²¹ Rutherford, R.B., *Homer: Odyssey Books XIX and XX*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 75-76.

IL'IA KUTIK AND HOMER

И как когда-то, в оны лета,
Арес – сраженный наповал
копьем аргосца Диомеда –
кровавым криком закричал,
так содрогнулось тело рыбе (46).

And just as one time, long ago,
Ares, felled by one blow
of the spear of the Argive Diomedes,
bellowed a bloody cry,
just so shuddered the fish's body.

It is an allusive joke on Kutik's part that for his own Homeric simile he uses an event in the *Iliad* which is itself subject to a Homeric simile. The structure also mirrors that of Homer's version, in book 5:859-868, where Ares first cries out, then shoots through the sky. Again, Kutik reverses the original simile: the material of Homer's simile, the chaos of the elements, is *Oda*'s reality; as opposed to that of the warriors, whom Kutik appropriates from the *Iliad* for his own simile.

Homer's influence is evident in more than just the Homeric similes. Kutik maintains that Metarealism inherited its narrative style from classical epic: 'Meta in Homer and Vergil has to do with the simultaneity of the epic and the subjective, [...] which thus produces an *intimate* perspective on *what is*, without bringing into view a *perceiving lyric subject*'.²² This is achieved through the use of metaphor, which links the objects and references that make up *Oda* in the absence of an evident narrator. Yet metaphor indicates the narratorial consciousness behind the text, as Homer's similes

²² Gibbons, Reginald, 'On Russian Meta-Realist Poetry: A Conversation with Ilya Kutik', *American Poetry Review*, 36/2007, 23.

do. The narrator also becomes visible in the structuring of the poem. The unbroken flow of associations in *Oda* is modelled on Homer's narrative style: 'The Homeric narrator [...] sees the plot as a continuous succession of events [...] and] goes to great lengths to construct his plot [...] by unfolding a chain of actions in which each link [...] leads naturally to the next'.²³ Kutik's pacing of the wave's progress with minutely detailed descriptions at particular points and digressions at others parallels Homer's manipulation of the battle scenes in the *Iliad*.

Kutik returns to Homer in the final stanza: 'vykhodit muza Kalliopa / na bereg pervoiu v riadu / kamen, vedia ikh cherez kamni' ('out comes the Muse Calliope / on-to the shore, first in the ranks of Camenae, / leading them through the stones'). Although Calliope was not strictly one of the Camenae, Kutik plays upon the similarity of the name for the Roman Muses and the Russian 'kamni' ('stones'). Calliope's significance is as the epic Muse – Homer's Muse. The acclamation of the Muse is a hallmark of classical epic. Just as in Homer it is the only point at which the narrator refers to himself in the first person,²⁴ in *Oda* it is the only point at which the narrator appears in the poem. It shatters the illusion of narratorlessness:

The invocations to the Muses are directed neither to the level of the story nor to that of the discourse, but to the sphere that oversees the construction of the narrative discourse out of the fabric of the story. In calling on the goddesses to show him the story, he subtly directs our attention to his own act of creation.²⁵

²³ Richardson, Scott Douglas, *The Homeric Narrator*, Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1990, p. 118.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

By showing himself at this point Kutik signals the ending of the poem, paralleling the only other occurrence of the authorial 'I' in the second stanza. Kutik's closing declaration, 'Za nimi zhe ia i poidu' ('I shall follow them') (63), indicates his intention to pursue the goal of writing epic poetry, specifically with a Homeric influence. This statement complicates the effect achieved through the preceding Homeric similes. In epic poetry it is usual to place the acclamation of the Muse at the beginning of the poem, rather than the end. This suggests that Kutik does not consider *Oda* the pinnacle of his achievements in the epic form, but rather a prelude to a later, greater epic. Moreover, the offhand tone in which Kutik declares his intention to follow the Muses indicates either humility or ambivalence – he is just tagging along. This conflicts with the arrogance implied both in the acclamation of the Muse, 'thrusting his "I" upon us in association with the goddesses of narrative' to confer authenticity,²⁶ and in the presumption of rivalling Homer.

Homer has a crucial yet ambivalent place in *Oda*. Homeric techniques and references abound, but only from the middle of the poem, and they are then undercut by Kutik's contradictory placing and casual wording of the acclamation of the Homeric Muse. *Oda* can be seen as a statement of Kutik's future intent to write an epic with a Homeric influence, but also that the present poem is not this epic and is therefore a work more or less independent of Homer.

The Mole-Homers Go Underground in *Luk Odisseia*

After *Oda*, Kutik's poetry shifts into lyric forms. Despite their smaller scale, Kutik's lyric poems still play frequently with Homer. The collection *Luk Odisseia* (1989-1991) declares with its title that Homer remains a crucial reference. Kutik pairs Homer with

²⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

Horace to explore various changes of state, which were plentiful in the years of its composition: Kutik's first travels beyond the bounds of the USSR, starting in 1988;²⁷ the Soviet Union's suddenly precarious standing following the fall of the Berlin Wall; and Kutik's move away from his earlier ideal of odic/epic poetry towards lyric forms. Of *Luk Odisseia* Kutik says 'mne nuzhno bylo dat'-pokazat' svoi sub''ektivnye – po mere vozmozhnogo – ob''ektivnye obrazy svoei "vita nuova" ' ('I needed to convey a subjective – so far as possible – objective likeness of my "vita nuova" ').²⁸ Moments symbolic of these changes recur through the collection. From Homer: the eponymous episode of the stringing and shooting of Odysseus' bow from the end of the *Odyssey*, and the fall of Troy from the Epic Cycle, which, although not from Homer's *Iliad* itself, is the natural conclusion of the story of the Trojan War. From Horace: the image of Horace on the sandy sea shore, symbolising the poet of *Oda* (Kutik before he left the USSR and abandoned *Oda*).

In 'Vospominanie ob ode' ('Remembrance of the Ode') Kutik plays in passing upon the similarity between 'Danes' and 'Danaeans' to parody the famous phrase from the *Aeneid* referring to the Trojan Horse, 'timeo danaos, et dona ferentis' ('I fear Greeks even when they bear gifts');²⁹ 'Danaitsev Danii, dary / ne prinosiashchikh, – chto boiat'sia?' ('Why fear the Danes of Denmark, / not bearing gifts?') (58).³⁰ This comments on Kutik's emergence from behind the Iron Curtain into Scandinavia of his own free will, in contrast to the Trojans' loss of their city walls through deception. In

²⁷ Babil'skii, 'Sny-podstrochniki', p. 10 of 59.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 27 of 59.

²⁹ Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 318.

³⁰ All poems in this section quoted from Kutik, Il'ia, *Luk Odisseia: tret'ia kniga stikhotvoreniii*, St Petersburg: Sovetskii pisatel', 1993.

IL'IA KUTIK AND HOMER

‘1991-...’ Kutik links the digits of the date with Hecuba’s 19 children, many already dead and the others scattered after the fall of Troy:

Эпос-Гомер.
Гекуба,
бедная-бедная, все 19
детей разлетелись //
в смерть (72).

Epic-Homer.
Poor, poor
Hecuba, all 19
children have flown away //
to death.

‘1991-...’ is paired with ‘1978-1991’, implying a clear divide between the first part of Kutik’s adult life and the rest, from 1991; the significance of this date is doubtless the break-up of the Soviet Union, which was already in progress by the October when the poem was written. In ‘Pustynia troikh’ (‘Desert of Three’) Kutik links the fall of Troy with the battle between lyric and epic in Soviet literature, which epic won:

Если между нами трещина пробежит
по сухой земле, как змея,
мы ее убьем (переступим), и этот вид
пре-ступления я
готов приравнять ко взятию Трои,
к победе Эпоса над собой,
т. е. – Лирикой... (82).

GEORGINA BARKER

If a crack runs between us
across the dry earth, like a snake,
we will kill (transgress) it, and
I am prepared to liken that kind of
trans-gression³¹ to the capture of Troy,
to the victory of Epic over itself,
i.e., Lyric...

This generic conflict came to be embodied by Pasternak (lyric, championed by Bukharin) and Mayakovsky (epic, imposed by Stalin).³² Kutik has written in similar terms about the Pyrrhic victory of epic over lyric: 'In Mayakovsky, the odic genre found its highest epic conclusion, to the prejudice of its own lyric potential'.³³ Kutik's interpretation of epic's victory here as Pyrrhic suggests his own generic indecision. The 'crack' is construable also as a split between Russia and Europe (this interpretation is facilitated by Kutik's reference to himself as Janus earlier in the poem). His reference to a moment that defined the literary aesthetic of the Soviet Union, as well as to its division from the West, within a collection discussing his emigration and the fall of the USSR, makes the 'transgression' in the poem redolent of Kutik's crossing the border into Europe.

The episode of the stringing and shooting of Odysseus' bow is hugely significant for Kutik, appearing not only in this, eponymous, book, but at other crucial points in his poetry and criticism. In the essay which opens the book, also named 'Luk

³¹ Kutik is punning on 'perestupim' ('we will overstep/transgress') and 'prestuplenie' ('crime/transgression').

³² Cavanagh, Clare, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West*, New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 15.

³³ Kutik, *Ode and the Odic*, p. 206.

Odisseia', he likens Odysseus' preparation to shoot the bow with 'the creative process', and the result with 'a poem'.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, this image recurs in *Luk Odisseia*. In the first poem, 'Slukh i golos' ('Hearing and Voice'), Kutik reduces poetry to its raw components, and equates his voice with Odysseus' arrow:

Голос – ты почерк от точки слуха,
только по воздуху. Т.Е. сей
путь – как маршрут отлетевшей с лука
Вашего – Одиссей – //
да, той стрелы (11).

Voice – you are the writing from the point of hearing,
only through the air. I.E. that
path is like the trajectory – flown forth from a bow,
yours, Odysseus – //
yes, of that arrow.

Kutik uses the Homeric reference to explain the gathering principle of his poetry: his voice (the arrow) draws together 'everything' (the air inside the axe heads), transforming heard things (references) and surroundings (the present moment) into the singular, directed thread of a poem. In 'Predmet' ('Subject') Kutik compares the flow of poetry through rhyme with an arrow, which is stuck in his throat:

Это А в горле
Как наконечник – торчит – стрелы
и не дает – «Ы» – выдохнуть

³⁴ Kutik, *Hieroglyphs of Another World*, p. 5.

GEORGINA BARKER

[...] Но течение
языка и круги, как в тире,
и стрела... (74)

That A in the throat
Like the tip – sticks out – of an arrow
and does not let – ‘U’ – exhale
[...] But the flow
of language, and circles, as in a shooting range,
and an arrow...

The fact that Odysseus’ arrow (poetry) is stuck in his throat, stopping him speaking, combined with the poem’s general incoherence and frequent Swedish interjections, suggests that Kutik is struggling to write poetry in emigration. It also comments on his abandonment of *Oda*. Kutik calls *Oda* his attempt at creating a poem like the arrow flying from Odysseus’ bow; yet with *Luk Odisseia* Kutik is moving on from this ideal form to lyric, which he had previously decried as unproductive, and declared dead. His perceived betrayal of *Oda* becomes a central issue for the collection, ‘Prozaicheskii postskriptum’ (‘Prosaic Postscript’). In this final word, Kutik answers the accusation made implicitly in the preceding poetry that he has betrayed the ode by turning to lyric: ‘Dazhe s toboi ia ne izmenial *Ode*. Ot Ody kak *zhanra* – k Ode kak *stiliu*’ (‘Even with you I have not been unfaithful to “Ode”. From the Ode as a *genre* – to the Ode as a *style*’) (86).

‘Vospominanie ob ode’ tackles Kutik’s progression away from his first work, through references to *Oda* and the figures who embody its odic and epic influences, Horace and Homer. The first line quotes *Oda*’s first line word for word, after which the poem diverges into contemplation of another coastline: not Ukraine, as in *Oda*, but

Denmark. Unlike *Oda*, the focus of the poem is not the landscape and associations evoked by it, but the poet himself, reflecting the change from more grand-scale poetry to subjective lyric. Kutik depicts himself as a former ‘writer of odes’, literally immersed in Horace:

Писатель од, он жил здесь сам,
вдали от их цивилизаций,
и тек по (так сказать) усам –
не попадая в рот – Гораций... (58)

The writer of odes, he lived here himself,
far from their civilisations,
and there flowed through his (as it were) moustache –
missing his mouth – Horace...

Third person, past tense, and adaptation of a traditional fairytale closural formula (‘po usam teklo, a v rot ne popalo’, ‘it flowed through my moustache, but missed my mouth’) all suggest distance from the ode, and farewell to it; even an unwilling, forced parting. Kutik depicts the ode’s very substance (sand, one of the main components of *Oda*) slipping between his fingers as he tries to cling on to it:

Язык его песочных од
(он размышлял свежо и горько)
как бы меж пальцами течет,
и – глядь! – внизу другая горка...//
Как между пальцами песок,
уходит – несмотря на сжатье... (58).

GEORGINA BARKER

The language of his sandy odes
(he brooded freshly and bitterly)
seems to flow through your fingers,
and – look! – below there’s another mound...//
Through your fingers like sand,
it *runs away* – no matter how tight you grasp it...

This same imagery and wording appears in ‘Tri pustyni’: ‘ody Goratsiia, chei pesochnyi / stikh mezhdū pal’tsev ukhodit’ (‘Horace’s odes, whose sandy / verse runs through your fingers’) (69). The penultimate stanza of ‘Vospominanie ob ode’ reprises the theme of sand as a symbol for time’s flow:

Писатель од, он жил здесь с
Горацием, и шторм-истерик
словно песочные часы
перевернул однажды берег (59).

The writer of odes, he lived here with Horace,
and one day a hysteric-storm
like an hourglass
overturned the seashore.

Kutik returns to this image of Horace and the sand-filled hourglass in ‘Prozaicheskii postskriptum’, and overturns it: ‘Ody Goratsiia – kak pustynia: v pesochnykh chasakh. Pereverni stranitsu... Pereverni chasy...’ (‘Horace’s odes are like a desert: in an hourglass. Turn over the page... Turn over the hourglass...’) (86). The hourglass sands symbolising the passing of time undergo a change of import be-

tween the poems and the afterword: from loss to the potential for renewal. The encapsulation of *Oda* in 'Vospominanie ob ode' into an hourglass miniaturises Kutik's earlier grand work: words like 'isterik' ('hysteric') and 'odnazhdy' ('one day') trivialise *Oda*, and the stanza as a whole sums up *Oda* in dismissively concise fashion. Along with the relegation of Horace (representing *Oda*) to the past, and the diminishment of *Oda* itself, *Oda*'s Homeric references are also diminished: Homer and the great fish (whose appearance in *Oda* was heralded by Homeric similes) become a 'podzemnyi krot' ('subterranean mole') and a 'sardina' ('sardine'), respectively (58).

Elsewhere Kutik problematises the diminishment of epic. 'Elegiia na tserkovnom kladbishch' ('Elegy in a church graveyard') again imagines Homer as a mole, digging foundations for future literature, of which the only visible sign is his epics, portrayed as a molehill and a burial mound: 'ot krotov-Gomerov / nam ostaetsia lish' kurgan Akhilla, / no ne poimesh': gde – epos, gde – mogila...' ('from the mole-Homers / all we have left is the burial mound of Achilles, / but you can't tell where the epic ends and the grave begins...') (22). This is an ambiguous image, trivialising and burying Homer, whilst affirming his legacy. Just as Homer's poetry had turned into a grave, in the epitaph Kutik's description of the poem's setting, a graveyard, becomes a description of his poem, as it literally becomes a gravestone, inscribed with words: 'ZDES' VSIUDU – KIRKEG[ARD]. A POSEMU / ELEGIEI NE ODURCHIT' ODU...' ('HERE, ALL IS KIERKEGAARD.³⁵ AND THIS IS WHY / THE ODE CANNOT BE FOOLED BY ELEGY...') (23). Kutik suggests that his turn to elegy cannot lessen his earliest work. Literalising generic conflict reminds the reader of the genres' usual purposes, elegy 'mourning the past', and ode 'praising the

³⁵ The Danish 'kirkegard', meaning 'cemetery', sounds identical to 'Kierkegaard', as Kutik discovered when he went to visit the grave of Kierkegaard in Copenhagen and asked the person working at the cemetery where it was: Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

new'.³⁶ The reminder of Kutik's odic vitality prepares the reader for the poem's movement away from death towards continuing creation at the end of the poem. This occurs in the person of a snail, a representation of Kutik, crawling through the poem from beginning to end. It carries the spiral of history on its back (the Marxist interpretation of Hegel), but declares itself free of this (Communist) ideology, choosing to carry instead literary influences. These are specifically the elegiac influences of the present poem, Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' and Vasilii Zhukovskii's translation 'Sel'skoe kladbishche' ('Village graveyard'), a foundational text in the development of modern Russian literature:³⁷

Я не улитка, чтоб тащить спираль
дьялектики за Гегелем марксизма.
Мой домик-томик, где Жуковский-Грей
[...] открыт... (22).

I am not a snail to drag the spiral
of dialectic behind the Hegel of Marxism.
My home-tome is where Zhukovskii-Gray
is open...

At the end the snail overtakes Achilles, representing Homer and epic: 'ULITKA OBGONIAET CHEREPAKHU, / A TA – AKHILLA...' ('THE SNAIL OVERTAKES THE TORTOISE, / AND IT – ACHILLES...') (24). As Kutik comes after Homer (in

³⁶ Ram, Harsha, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*, Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003, p. 233.

³⁷ Ciepiela, Catherine, 'Reading Russian Pastoral: Zhukovsky's Translation of Gray's Elegy', in: Sandler, Stephanie (ed.), *Rereading Russian Poetry*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999, pp. 31, 36.

the 'race' of life – alluding to the tortoise and the hare and Zeno's paradox), he is able to make use of the foundations the mole-Homer had dug and so surpass him.³⁸

Homer and his odic counterpart Horace are depicted throughout *Luk Odisseia* as fallen, diminished, surpassed, passé. The obsolescence of these two figures signals Kutik's leave-taking of *Oda*, his own epic project, and of the Soviet Union, the fallen epic project.

The Fat-Cat Homer in *Persidskie Pis'ma*

Homer is a notable presence in just one other of Kutik's lyric collections, *Persidskie pis'ma*, which has five poems referencing Homer. Its (Montesquieu-esque) title refers to Kutik's Persian Blue cat Anton, who is the central figure of many of the poems. Whereas in *Oda* and *Luk Odisseia* his Homeric references pertained mostly to the nature of the poetry or to politics, in this collection Kutik takes a far more familiar approach to Homer.

The cat in Kutik's lyric poetry is not simply a depiction of a beloved pet, but also a representation of Kutik himself: 'kot snachala prosto kot, a potom – ia sam' ('at first the cat is just a cat, and then it is me').³⁹ In placing Homer alongside his cat Kutik brings Homer close to himself. 'Pamiati Antona i Allena' ('In memory of Anton and Allen'), a joint obituary for his cat and his friend and fellow poet Allen Ginsberg, states: 'poet est' Gomer, i ne v khor ono' ('the poet is Homer, and not for the common chorus') (77-80).⁴⁰ Not only is the cat on a par with Kutik and his contemporary poets, they are all on a par with Homer.

³⁸ I am grateful to Kutik for clarifying elements of this poem: Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

³⁹ Babil'skii, 'Sny-podstrochniki', p. 29 of 59.

⁴⁰ All poems in this section are quoted from Kutik, Il'ia, 'Persidskie pis'ma, ili vtoraiia chast' knigi Smert' Tragedii, vykhodiashchaia pervoi', *Sovremennaia russkaia poeziia*, Moscow: Kommentarii, 2003.

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In bringing the cat into the Homeric world in three closely grouped poems, ‘Kot: pokidaiu bitvu’ (‘Cat: I desert battle’, 42-4), ‘Kot obrashchaetsia k bogu’ (‘Cat addresses god’, 49), and ‘Preemnik’ (‘Receiver’, 51), Kutik brings Homer into his world, both literary and personal. ‘Kot: pokidaiu bitvu’ parodies and belittles the hero-against-hero combat that is the basis of much of the *Iliad*:

Битва – на Гектора падающий Ахилл,
на Ахилла – Парис, на Париса – Аякс, т.д.
Это карточный домик, который хил
изначально, что б умные не гадали.
Дайте бойцам кота – прижимать как щит,
что не от боли, а от любви трещит...

Battle: Hector attacked by Achilles,
Achilles – by Paris, Paris – by Ajax, etc.
A house of cards, which was shaky
to begin with, as if it takes a genius to guess that.
Give the warriors a cat, to press close like a shield,
which cracks not from pain, but from love...

The ludicrous suggestion of taking a cat into battle as a shield proves, surprisingly, effective. The overpowering of strife by love shows the lyric, rather than epic, focus of the poem. Kutik casts his cat as Menelaus, with himself in the role of the slain Patroclus:

Битва протяжна, как песий лай...
Заливаются в небе стрелы...

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И кот выносит, как Менелай,
из битвы мое же тело...

The battle is drawn out, like a dog's baying...
Arrows pour out in the sky...
And the cat carries my body
out of the battle, like Menelaus...

These lines have behind them *Iliad* book 17, in which Menelaus fights the Trojans for Patroclus' body. The cat's effortless accomplishment of this hard-won, long-drawn-out epic feat again shows the lyric setting. In 'Kot obrashchaetsia k bogu' the cat enters an area of Homer that Kutik often uses to express his own biography – Odysseus' exile: 'sdelai tak, chtob vernut'sia v svoiu itaku / mog vseгда ia!' ('make it so that I can always return / to my Ithaca!'). 'Preemnik' presents a highly irreverent and familiar depiction of the cat as Homer, playing on the minced oath 'bliakha-mukha': 'tolstym gomerom, raskrytym na korobliakh, – / zabyvaia i mukh i bliakh' ('a fat Homer, splayed over the ships, / forgetting both f-lies and shi-iels'). The reference to the Catalogue of Ships from *Iliad* book 2 is triangulated via Mandelstam's 'Bessonitsa. Gomer. Tugie parusa' ('Insomnia. Homer. Taut sails'): 'U tebia poiavilsia priemnik, kot, ot moei bessonitsy. / Gomer nikogda mne ne sposobstvoval, kak O.M.' ('Cat, you have developed a receiver, tuned to my insomnia. / Homer never worked for me like for O.M.'). Kutik enjambes the first two words of Mandel'shtam's poem, drawing attention to his reference. Refracting the Homeric allusion via a more recent, Russian, reception of the same passage 'domesticates' the reference, bringing Homer further into Kutik's own literary tradition. Kutik uses this particular dual reference knowingly, for in his reception of the *Iliad* Mandel'shtam brought Homer into his personal sphere just as Kutik does here.

Kutik uses Homer to explore a failed relationship in ‘Razryv’ (‘Rupture’), one verse of which invokes both of Homer’s epics. Kutik parodies perhaps the most famous line in classical literature, the first line of the *Iliad*: ‘Gnev vospoi, o boginia, Il’i, Vital’ina syna!’ (‘Sing, o Goddess, the anger of Il’ia, son of Vitalii!’) This equates the loss of his lover with Achilles’ loss of Briseis, an incongruous comparison which mocks Kutik’s inability to react as an epic hero would, but implies an Achillean level of petulance nevertheless. In the following stanza Kutik equates himself with Odysseus and his lover with Penelope, undercutting this, however, by implying that she was not as chaste as the exemplary Penelope: ‘prished v lokhmot’iakh – kak Odissei v Itaku / (poskol’ku s ee zhenikhami ia dazhe ne voznikaiu – / uzh slishkom ikh mnogo na karte...)’ (‘arrived in rags, like Odysseus in Ithaca / (insofar as I do not even bring up her suitors – / there are just too many of them on the map...)’). The themes of this poem, and Kutik’s identification with Achilles and Odysseus, draw very close to Kutik’s reception of Homer in *Epos*; however the irreverent, personal spirit is still avowedly lyric.

Persidskie pis'ma’s Homeric references are occasionally refracted through a reference to a poet closer to Kutik, are often humorous, usually appear in the context of events in Kutik’s personal life, and frequently involve Kutik’s cat. This irreverent, intimate take on Homer brings him into the poet’s inner sphere.

Making Homer an Accomplice in *Epos*’s Epic Action

The mere fact of *Epos*’s existence is the fulfilment of the statement of intent made in the final stanza of *Oda*, and apparently renounced in *Luk Odisseia*, to create a post-modern Russian Homeric epic. However, with its 300 plus pages of verse there is nothing ‘mere’ about *Epos*, published between 2009-2010. Kutik defines *Epos* as

‘personal epic’.⁴¹ Il’ia Kutik, the poet’s own persona, is the epic’s hero. Kutik planned *Epos* as the ‘hypertext’ embracing all his previous works.⁴² The personal nature of *Epos* is also expressed, as in *Persidskie pis'ma*, in its representation of Homer.

Kutik cites the main generic influences of *Epos* as Homer, Dante, Pound, and Akhmatova.⁴³ Unlike the precision of Kutik’s shaping of postmodernist citational narrative into a neoclassical form in *Oda*, in *Epos* the epic form expands uncomplainingly to include a multitude of themes, references, styles, and genres, until it is more like the idea of an epic. In this, *Epos* is typical of postmodernist narrative poems:

postmodernism adopts, to a degree unprecedented in ‘high-art’ poetry, the conventions of popular narrative genres – science fiction and gothic, the Western and the adventure story, comic books and animated cartoons, soap opera and pornography. [...] it strives to recover, through pastiche and parody, narrative modes that flourished *before* the imperialist expansion of lyric [...] including [...] ancient epic.⁴⁴

Seven books of lyric and odic poems follow ‘Rama’ (‘Frame’), the first half of *Epos*, corresponding to the events in ‘Rama’’s epic narrative. Kutik has said ‘*Epos* is any epic’:⁴⁵ it becomes so by gathering and syncretising all preceding traditions, from antiquity to modernism.

While many classical and non-classical authors appear in *Epos* as both influences and characters, Homer is Kutik’s paramount intertext in terms of characters

⁴¹ Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ McHale, *Obligation toward the Difficult Whole*, p. 258.

⁴⁵ Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

and citation. The plot and structure of the poem are determined by joint reference to Dante and Homer. Kutik appropriates Dante's plot and position as author-narrator-protagonist, and Homer's main characters as fellow characters. This presumptuous familiarity is echoed in the narrative: Homer and Dante's names occur so often as to seem like invocations rather than citations: Kutik exclaims 'u menia s Gomerom slozhnye otnosheniia!' ('I have a complicated relationship with Homer!') (125),⁴⁶ and Dante's appearance is mocked: 'alligator – (portret ego videli?) Alig'eri' ('alligator (have you seen his portrait?) Alighieri') (44), as is his masterpiece, which is characterised as 'sploshnoi BiBiSi na nebesi' ('one long BBC on high') (67). They are so fundamental to the construction of *Epos* that they become more than just influences: 'Sozdat' nechto novoe na territorii Gomera i Dante – eto sdelat' ikh ne epicheskoi model'iu, a souchastnikami epicheskogo deistviia' ('To create something new on the territory of Homer and Dante is to make them not an epic model, but accomplices in the epic action') (8). Basing his epic on Dante's *Divina Commedia* (Divine Comedy), the most famous post-classical national epic, implies a claim for similar status for *Epos*. Significantly, Kutik attributes the same influences to the closest Russia has to a national epic, Gogol's unfinished trilogy: 'writing *Dead Souls*, he was rewriting both Homer and Dante'.⁴⁷ Although as 'personal epic' it comes out of a Russian context, Kutik has said he does not see *Epos* as a national epic (2014) – the action occurs mostly in America and Greece, and addresses international, rather than specifically Russian, themes.

Kutik introduces *Epos*'s Dantean principle on the very first page of the poem, in the introduction: 'A ia vas poprobuiu provesti / cherez zhizni geroev – v vide *ada*,

⁴⁶ All excerpts in this section are quoted from Kutik, Il'ia, *Epos*.

⁴⁷ Kutik, Il'ia, *Writing as Exorcism: The Personal Codes of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol*, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2005, p. 82.

chistilishche i raia – u Eposa moego ‘(I shall try to lead you / through the lives of the heroes – in the guise of *hell, purgatory, and paradise* – of my “Epos” ’) (9). This structure gives the text a very definite teleology, in keeping with Kutik’s wish ‘to create something that has a beginning and an end’.⁴⁸ Homer is the other half of this: Kutik merges the Dantean structure with that of the *Odyssey*: Kutik’s heroic path mimics that of Odysseus; the absent heroine, Kutik’s wife, is simultaneously Beatrice and Penelope; the meeting with her, which is the epic’s *telos*, is the attainment of both Paradise and Ithaca. Kutik says that he started *Epos* in the same place as Pound started his *Cantos*: with the *Odyssey*.⁴⁹ Kutik selects Swedenborg as his guide through the underworld, over Dante’s guide Virgil. This has the effect of promoting Homer, who remains the sole representative of classical epic. Virgil is seldom mentioned in *Epos* (and then generally in the context of Dante), and Aeneas is included only reluctantly in Kutik’s list of epic heroes who had preceded him on his journey into the Underworld: ‘niskhozhdenie v te glubiny, kuda Orfei, Odissei i, ladno, Enei / soshli (khot’ poslednii – iz pal’tsa vysosan! On – voobshche ledenets dlia Avgusta...’ (‘descent into those depths which Orpheus, Odysseus, and, fine, Aeneas / penetrated (although the latter was plucked from thin air! He was basically a lollipop for Augustus...’) (75).

Homer first appears in *Epos* in the second chapter of ‘Rama’, under the unpromising title ‘Vospominanie ob epose-Gomere, i pochemu ego net teper’ (‘Recollections of Homeric epic and why it no longer exists’); he and his kind of epic have disappeared along with Ancient Greece. There is a constant tension in *Epos* between past and present; indeed, one character, Daffy, dies because he mistakes modern Greece for Ancient Greece (93). A Hollywood reimagining of Ancient Greece illus-

⁴⁸ Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

trates the paucity of epic in modernity, and sets up a fundamental binary for the book – between anger and restraint, Homer and Plato:

Но что был бы эпос у греков, т.е. их *Илиада*, без гнева? –
что если бы, как на Гулливера, *тысячи тысяч пут*
наложили на Ахиллову *страсть* по Патроклу иль Брисеиде –
платоноведы? –
где был бы эпос, а? – *а в нигде!* (19)

But *what would have become* of the Greeks' epic, i.e. their *Iliad*, without anger?
What if, like Gulliver, *thousands of thousands of fetters*
were put on Achilles' *passion* for Patroclus or Briseis by *platonists*?
Where would *epic* be then, eh? Why, *nowhere!*

The Homer-Plato binary is embodied in Kutik and the object of his quest, his missing wife, who is modelled upon a real-life Platonist:⁵⁰ 'ona – uletela – k Platonu' ('She... flew away... to Plato') (50); 'mozhet, strastei / ty ne prinimaesh' – po *nauchnym* eshche prichinam, / a? nu, kak platonovedka?' ('Perhaps you reject / emotions for *intellectual* reasons? / You know, as a platonist?') (329).

Having established that anger is vital for epic, Kutik makes his own Iliadic acclamation of the Muse – undercut somewhat by its belated placement halfway through chapter 5, and comically generic, informal phrasing: '*Gnev teper' vospoi, Kto Ty Tam Est' Dlia Etogo Naverkhu! – O, pomogi vospet!*' ('Now sing my anger, Whoever You Are Who Does That On High! – O, help me to sing it!') (44) Yet Kutik claims the same Muse as Homer nonetheless: 'k Kalliope ia / by vzvyl, muze Eposa moego!' ('I

⁵⁰ Ibid.

would have howled to Calliope, / the Muse of my *Epos*!') (76) The importance of anger becomes clearer in chapter 7, at the gates of Hell, which are compared with those in Dante (79). Mimicking Odysseus' sacrifice of sheep to gain entrance to the Underworld in *Odyssey* book 11, Kutik sacrifices the 'bumaga-baran' ('paper-sheep') which he has been holding as a torch, and to which he has been telling his story: 'tak barashek belyi – stanovitsia chernoï ovtsoi v Gomere, / i Odissei – spuskaïas' v Aid – pererezaet emu glotku' ('Thus the white lamb becomes the black sheep from Homer, / and Odysseus, descending into Hades, cuts its throat') (79). This sacrifice sparks the epiphany of the Homeric heroes' identity, settling the question of the authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*:

А Одиссей – кто он? – а Лев он, как
и Ахилл! – Так и написано в Песни 22-ой – «Подобился льву он
(это после убийства женихов!) [...]
– А знаете, что Одиссей
значит, как имя? – В Песни 19-ой прямо сказано:
Одиссей означает: «сердитый», «гневный» – От глагола
«одиссомай», т.е. «сержусь», «гневаюсь» – он происходит! – Т.е.
гнев, гнев Одиссей! –
как – точь-в-точь Ахилл, так ведь получается? – Вот вам и
доказательство! – *авторства!* (79-80)

And Odysseus – who is he? He's Lion, like
Achilles! This is written in Book 22: '*He was like a lion*' (this is after
the killing of the suitors!)
But do you know what the name Odysseus
means? In Book 19 it says directly:

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Odysseus means 'angry', 'wrathful' – it comes from the verb 'odusso-mai', i.e. 'I am angry', 'I hate'! I.e. anger, anger is Odysseus!
Just like Achilles, *isn't it?* There's your proof of *authorship!*

Kutik takes his proof from *Odyssey* 19:407-409, in which the story of how Odysseus got his name is recounted. However, the etymology Kutik cites is ambiguous, as it is unclear whether the participle is active or passive, 'one who is angry' or 'one who incurs anger'.⁵¹ Kutik chooses the former interpretation in order to unify Odysseus with the more traditionally Homeric Achilles under the single idea of epic anger, allowing him to take on the heroic mantle, descend into the Underworld, and begin the epic proper.

Soon afterwards, Olen, supposedly the earliest poet,⁵² exhorts Kutik to behave like a true epic hero and slaughter his enemies: 'Ty / dolzhen byl ubit' ego i napit'sia ego krovi' ('You / should have killed him and drunk of his blood') (85). Olen intimates that Kutik cannot be a true epic poet without embracing epic's primal, Homeric savagery:

Муз
[...] Уста ты и есть! – ты только должен [...]
вспомнить [...] Гомера! – Т.е. – взять том
«Одиссеи» и перечитать то место
перед казнью женихов, где даётся описание Денницы и её –
колесницы!.. Вот и всё... Там
ты найдёшь свои лампочки (85).

⁵¹ Stanford, W.B., 'The Homeric Etymology of the Name Odysseus', *Classical Philology*, 47/1952, 209–213.

⁵² Cherkasskii, Daniil, in: Kutik, *Epos*, p. 389.

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You *are* the Muses' Mouthpiece! You must just [...] remember Homer! I.e. take a volume of the 'Odyssey' and reread the place before the execution of the suitors, where there's a description of Dawn and her chariot!.. That's it... There you will find your lamps.

The promised reward, 'lamps', are revealed in the final chapter of 'Katai' ('Cathay'), 'Lampochka: Vstrecha' ('Lamp: Meeting'), to be his wife/Beatrice in Paradise (374).

Plato is *Epos*'s anti-Homer. Kutik often cites, in the context of an argument with his wife, Plato's heinous act of excluding Homer from his Republic:

ТОЛЬКО ВОТ ЭТО
качество — Гнев — а, то есть, по-твоему, *несдержанность!*.. —
...Платон уж так
ненавидел, что даже любимого им Гомера
из-за Ахилла — изгнал из Государства! (100)

only that
quality, Anger – that is, in your opinion, *unrestraint!* – Plato so
hated, that he even banished his beloved Homer,
because of Achilles, from his Republic!

He insists that Plato was conflicted between his poetic passions and his philosophy, and exiled Homer because of this:

Платон-то — *сам поэт!* — а поэт и ученик Сократа вместе —

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это трудно, даже с *пока-*
тым лбом и выпученными глазами! — ибо как совмещать страсти
(что и есть, как-никак, поэт) и их полное забвение (что и есть
Сократ), а?
— ведь оксюморон, *да ведь*, получается?
[...]
— ... Поэтому — всегда легче выгнать Гомера, чем — себя самого из
Государства, так ведь? (100-1)

But Plato was *himself a poet!* A poet and student of Socrates simulta-
neously —
that's difficult, even with a
sloping forehead and bulging eyes! For how can you combine passions
(he was, after all, a poet) with total disregard for them?
— you get an oxymoron, *don't you?*
[...]
Therefore — it is always easier to banish Homer from the Republic than
yourself, is it not?

Kutik's quest in 'Rama' is staged as a detective thriller, and his opponent, the murderer hunted over the course of the book, is eventually revealed to be Plato. Kutik sees Plato as 'providence', a 'demigod' ruling people's fates, resolving conflicts either by killing or rewarding, and describes providence as 'the frame in which we live';⁵³ this links Plato with the title of the main, epic narrative, 'Rama', or 'frame'. As the murderer, Plato is identifiable with the eponymous frame as the character creating and controlling the context for Kutik's quest in 'Rama'.

⁵³ Kutik, Interview with Georgina Barker.

Suitably for a semi-divine character representing providence, Plato becomes a key figure once again in the final book of Purgatory and the book of Paradise, 'Loto Platona' ('Plato's Lotto') and 'Katai'. There is a rapprochement of sorts between Homer and Plato. An exculpatory anecdote shows Plato acting contrary to his anti-epic stance: at the performance of Antimachus' epic *Thebaid*, Plato was the only person who stayed through the night to the end of the poem. The description of the lengthy epic, its 'stroki plius siuzhety smeshany – kak v loto!' ('lines plus themes jumbled, like in lotto!') (321), is reminiscent of Kutik's own *Epos*, and he seems to feel an empathetic gratitude for Plato's patience, perhaps hoping that his own readers are doing the same. Moreover, Homeric anger is no longer held up as the ideal, and in a condemnation of the immorality of Homer's heroes Kutik concludes that he is stuck between Homeric passion and Platonic restraint: '*poet est' geroi s sovest'iu*, potomu i zazhatyi – ukh! i / kak eshche! – mezhdu dvukh logik' ('a poet is a hero with a conscience, and therefore squeezed – oof! / and how! – between two logics') (334). This balance between Homer and Plato only becomes possible in the Paradise parts of *Epos*, 'Katai' and the end of 'Rama'; indeed, it is necessary to facilitate the movement of the poem away from epic anger towards harmony. This can be seen in the revision of the placing of Kutik's goal within the *Odyssey*: in Olen's speech towards the beginning of 'Rama' the reward precedes the epic violence; it is later revealed that he actually referred to Odysseus and Penelope's prolonged night together after Odysseus has killed the suitors: 'V odnom lish' oshibsia Olen: mesto vziato / iz Pesni 23-ei – posle ubiistva uzhe zhenikhov, a ne do! – / vo vremja liubovnoi nochi Odisseia i Penelopy' ('Olen was mistaken about just one thing: the place was taken / from Book 23 – after the killing of the suitors, and not before! – / during *Odysseus and Penelope's night of love*') (113). Homer and Plato must be harmonised in order for Kutik to attain

the level of tranquillity and introspection required to enter Paradise and be reunited with his beloved.

The fundamental, underlying ‘plot’ of *Epos* concerns a relationship – that of the epic hero and his beloved. Correspondingly, Homer is cast in personal terms, as someone in a ‘complicated relationship’ with not only Kutik, but (metapoetically) with the other influences upon the epic, such as Dante and Plato.

Conclusion

As a poet constantly aware of and sensitive to literary influence, whose works are a postmodern patchwork of conspicuous citation, Kutik uses references to classical authors, the archetypes of the genres he works with, to indicate and formulate the genre of his current work. Homer, especially, is a constant in Kutik’s poetry; from the fleeting references to him up to his capacity as the primary model of Kutik’s epic, Kutik engages with Homer as a foundation, with which to play and from which to depart. The changing reception of Homer is indicative of Kutik’s intentions within the given work. Kutik’s ‘complicated relationship’ with Homer has developed over the course of his thirty-plus-year career. In that time, Homer has been a stylistic model – for epic similes, for acclamations of the epic Muse, and for, simply, epic; Homer has been a negative influence – an overshadowing predecessor, or a way to express (paradoxically) obsolescence; Homer has also been something more personal – an alternative self, as cat or fellow poet, and an ‘accomplice’ in poetry.

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KEVIN WINDLE

OF DIPLOMATS AND SPIES: A NEW BOOK ON THE FIRST SOVIET CONSUL IN
AUSTRALIA AND THE PETROV AFFAIR

This book by Iurii Artemov has two titles: on the front cover and title page it is *Russkaia revoliutsiia v Avstralii i seti shpionazha* (*The Russian Revolution in Australia and Spy Networks*); on the back cover in English *Russian Revolution in Australia: Diplomats and Spies*.¹ Both titles reflect the difficulty of capturing and combining two subjects which have in common an Australian setting, but little else. The book consists of a preface (*Ot avtora*) and two roughly equal parts: 'The Fate of the First Consul', an account of the life of Petr Simonov, the Bolshevik consul in Australia in 1918-1921, and 'The Case of Colonel Petrov', describing the celebrated 'Petrov Affair' of 1954. Artemov's work has the distinction of being the first in Russian to treat at length two notable figures in the shared history of the Soviet Union and Australia. Simonov, the Soviet consul unrecognised by the host government, has been the subject of a small number of shorter studies, in English and Russian, including an informative piece by Artem Rudnitskii, the author behind the pseudonymous Artemov.² The case of Vladimir Petrov, on the other hand, has been much studied and debated in Australia over the past six decades, but is little known in Russia. Indeed, there appears to be no precedent in Russian for Artemov's detailed work on the well-known defector.

¹ Artemov, Iurii, *Russkaia revoliutsiia v Avstralii i seti shpionazha*, St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2017, 271 pp.

² Though this is not stated, the first part of this volume builds on the same author's similarly-titled article: Rudnitskii, Artem, 'Sud'ba pervogo konsula: K istorii rossiisko-avstraliiskikh otnoshenii', *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, 2012, 5-26. http://interaffairs.ru/i/istor_2012.pdf (accessed 15 September /2017).

That said, the marriage of the two parts is not the happiest. The twin heroes, who belong to very different historical periods, are presented in the preface as polar opposites: the study, we are told, will contrast loyalty and treachery, idealism and cynicism, romanticism and pragmatism, selflessness and self-interest. A fervent believer in the radiant future (Simonov) is to be set against a careerist who cares nothing for that future (Petrov) (p. 5). If this binary opposition seems an excessively schematic approach to complex events, the author avers that he has attempted to go beyond clichés and arrive at an understanding of his characters, each in his own way ‘a hostage of circumstances’ (p. 6). The principal beneficiary of this understanding, however, by a wide margin, is the Bolshevik consul.

The book’s strength in both parts lies principally in its use of files held in the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Archive (AVPRF), out of reach of most previous students of the field. Where it disappoints is in its disregard for other essential sources and occasional misuse of those to hand, and reliance in places on others which are hardly worthy of scholarly attention. The two parts will be treated separately below.

The First Consul

The value of Artemov’s study of Simonov derives from the close examination of the AVPRF files, which help to bring out the character of the main protagonist and show the difficulty he found himself in as the unrecognised representative of an unrecognised regime. The greatest obstacle he faced, it turns out, was not the lack of recognition from the British and Australian governments, but an absence of support, direction or co-operation from his own government. We know that he had only minimal evidence of ever having been appointed; the laconic cable from Maksim Litvinov (January 1918), then the Soviet representative in London, relaying Trotsky’s instruction,

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said only 'Siminoff [*sic*] appointed Consul British Foreign Office advised'.³ It was never followed by any formal letters of credence, let alone a salary. It is less well known that a statement from the same Litvinov in June 1921 (p. 99) emphatically denied that there was a Soviet consulate in Australia. This meant that, for most of his three and a half years in office, Simonov was left to his own devices, having to represent Soviet interests as best he could while seeking independent means of support. Occasional communications which did reach him placed him in serious difficulty, for example, when he was instructed to inform Russians in Australia that their country of origin was not accepting returnees, as Artemov makes clear. We are given a sound and generally sympathetic portrait, showing the plight of the hero, cut off in a distant land hostile to his own, condemned for a while to prison, ignored by his supposed employer, and ill-informed about the state of affairs in the country he served.

Of particular merit is Artemov's investigation of Simonov's earlier life and his reasons for leaving Russia, previously unclear, as the consul gave contradictory accounts. Artemov favours the version which has him working for a newspaper publisher in Khabarovsk until 1912, when a charge of failing to honour a promissory note led him to decamp to Harbin, whence he proceeded to Japan and Australia (p. 20). The accusation of misappropriation would dog him later in Australia: Simonoff complained that an attempt was made to blackmail him in 1920 (pp. 108-109).

Artemov is certainly right in saying that on arrival in Australia Simonov had no background whatever in revolutionary activism (p. 20). While he would sometimes make claims to the contrary, there is every reason to believe his confession in an article signed 'A. Simens' in a Brisbane Russian newspaper in January 1917, evidently not located by the author, in which Simonov wrote that he had been politically backward and firmly set in his ways until in mid-1912 he fell in with some young fugitives

³ National Archives of Australia (NAA): BP4/2, Q2801-2902, Q2839.

from Siberia in the cane-fields of North Queensland, and developed political awareness.⁴

When Simonov himself wrote of his appointment as consul, in an article published in 1922, he gave the impression that it came as a surprise.⁵ Artemov takes this at face value, supposing that Lenin's long-term ally Fedor Sergeev ('Artem'), who had returned from Australia to Russia in 1917, had recommended Simonov to Trotsky (p. 17). That possibility cannot be excluded, but an intercepted letter in the correspondence files (censor's) held in the National Archives of Australia shows clearly that Simonov had actively sought such an appointment, through the agency of another returnee. A. Loktin wrote to him in January 1918, saying that he had spoken to Trotsky, a 'most agreeable fellow', and that 'your appointment came about without trouble'.⁶ That particular missive may be hard to locate, but it has figured, with other related material, in published research.⁷

Something of Simonov's character comes through in the correspondence and press articles quoted, sometimes at greater length than is really necessary. In his writing the consul was given to undiplomatic language and much hyperbole, especially where the perceived achievements of the Soviet government and the actions of its opponents were concerned, and he often responded to criticism with personal abuse. Thus he termed the male editor of the Sydney *Sun* a 'dotty old woman' (*pridu-*

⁴ Simens, A., 'Korrespondentsiia iz Broken-Khila', *Rabochaia zhizn'*, 12/01/1917, 4.

⁵ Simonov, Petr, 'Tri s polovinoi goda sovetskogo diplomaticheskogo predstavitel'stva', *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, 15(133)/November 1922, 61-66.

⁶ NAA: A6286 1/18, Loktin to Simonoff 28 January 1918, QF812.

⁷ See e.g. Windle, Kevin, 'Trotskii's Consul: Peter Simonoff's account of his years as Soviet representative in Australia (1918-1921)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 93.3/2015, 493-524; idem, 'Pervyi konsul Sovetskoi Rossii v Avstralii P. F. Simonov i ego druž'ia i nedrugi', *Klio*, 6(114)/June 2016, 176-188.

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rochnaia starukha) (p. 75), and others of his opponents are ‘grubby mischief-makers’ (*pakostniki*) and ‘scoundrels’ (*negodiai*) (p. 110). As Artemov says, in hailing the achievements of the Soviet regime and the ‘all-powerful’ Red Army, of which he actually knew very little, the ‘starry-eyed romantic’ (*prekrasnodushnyi romantik*, p. 87) lost all sense of proportion (p. 73).

Full credit is due to the author for setting out what appears to be a definitive, if brief, account of Simonov’s last years, after his return to Russia in late 1921. Earlier sources had offered speculative if not spurious versions, in which he became a diplomat in Afghanistan and disappeared in the purges or committed suicide. From the AVPRF files, it seems that he died a natural death in 1934, having spent some years in the employment of a petroleum trust, part of those years as its representative in Paris (p. 121).

While broadly correct in both its assumptions and its statements concerning Simonov himself, Artemov’s account is less reliable in what concerns Simonov’s comrades, allies and adversaries. The narrative dealing with the infancy of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which involved Simonov, Paul Freeman and Aleksandr Zuzenko in varying degrees, suffers from some lacunae and mis-statements, which could have been avoided by further investigation of archival holdings.

It is true that when Freeman made his return visit to Australia in March-April 1921 as an emissary of the Profintern, he backed the Reardon-Everitt faction, formerly the Australian Socialist Party (ASP), which Simonov bitterly opposed, as shown by his angry letter of 8 April 1921, cited by Artemov, to the Comintern Executive (ECCI). However, the role of Zuzenko is presented in somewhat unsatisfactory fashion. It is claimed that Zuzenko, now a sea captain, conveyed Freeman to Australia (p. 69), which would place Zuzenko in Australia in early 1921, along with Freeman and Simonov. In fact Zuzenko, having been deported in April 1919, did not become a sea

captain until 1924, and paid no return visits to Australia in that capacity.⁸ Further, on the same page, Zuzenko is quoted (correctly) as saying that in May 1920 the ECCI resolved to send him on a mission to Australia ‘to establish a Communist party’. However, the reader will find nothing more about Zuzenko’s endeavours in this area, where he would clearly be required to collaborate with either Simonov or Freeman, beyond the fact that he held Freeman in contempt. In point of fact, when Simonov and Freeman met in Sydney in April 1921 on the eve of Freeman’s departure for Russia, Zuzenko was in the USA, making his way back to Australia as a Comintern agent, to arrive only in July 1922, long after Simonov’s departure and Freeman’s untimely death. He was, however, in time to play an important role in drawing the CPA’s still warring factions together, favouring Simonov’s protégés at the expense of the former ASP, as the Comintern files and publications in Australia clearly show.

As for ‘the Bolshevik Zuzenko’ (p. 101) being Artem’s ‘closest assistant’ (*blizhaishii pomoshchnik*, p. 25), this cannot be sustained. Zuzenko held fast to his anarchist convictions until well after his first deportation, and these were anathema to the Bolshevik Artem, who had taken aim at him in an attack on ‘anarcho-syndicalists’.⁹ In 1918-1919 Bolshevik ‘maximalists’ such as German Bykov (Rezanov) were often at odds with Zuzenko, who later told how he was converted to Bolshevism only in 1920.¹⁰ The misnomer *blizhaishii pomoshchnik* originates in a flip-pant and facetious piece in *Novaia utinaia pravda*, cited as a source at a later point. Salient details show that that article in turn relied for much of its misinformation, without acknowledgement, on the novels of Iurii Klimenchenko about Zuzenko. The

⁸ In Rudnitsky’s article ‘Sud’ba ...’ (p. 19) it is also stated incorrectly that Zuzenko as a sea captain ‘paid more than one visit to the fifth continent’.

⁹ T. S. [Artem], ‘Sal’to-mortale avstraliiskogo sindikalizma’, *Rabochaia zhizn’*, 22/1/1917; also in Artem (F. A. Sergeev), *Stat’i, rechi, pis’ma*, Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983, pp. 153-156.

¹⁰ Matulichenko, A. [Zuzenko], ‘Kak ia, anarkhist, stal lenintsem’, *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 16-18 February 1921.

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author of the *NUP* piece, in which facts cohabit promiscuously with *canards*, provides a confused summary of Zuzenko's travels and also gives the false impression, following Klimenchenko, that he was a Bolshevik from earliest youth.¹¹

What of Simonov's own ideological affiliation? He too had not been an early convert to the Bolshevik cause, having been close to the anarchistic Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which caused him some difficulty when it became necessary for him to proclaim himself a Bolshevik and Leninist. His article of November 1917 argued forcefully against a separate peace with the Kaiser,¹² and was therefore contrary to Bolshevik policy when Trotsky signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty in March 1918. Konstantin Kliushin, leader of the short-lived 'Russian Group of Workers' hostile to Simonov, took full advantage of this, republishing Simonov's article in his own *Listok* to demonstrate that Simonov was no Bolshevik, and was therefore unfit to represent Soviet Russia.¹³ While Artemov is aware of the 'Group' (pp. 43-46), Kliushin's colourful vituperations against Simonov may have been beyond his reach, since copies of *Listok* and *Rabochaia zhizn'* are hard to find. They have been cited, however, in research published in Britain and Russia.¹⁴

As will be apparent, much care and discrimination is required in the use of sources dealing with the likes of Simonov and Zuzenko, particularly when they show as little concern for accuracy and attribution as *NUP*. The latter offers passages from one of Zuzenko's reports – fifteen lines in all with some cutting and pasting – said

¹¹ *Novaia utinaia pravda*, <http://upravda2.ru/article.php?id=207> (last accessed 15/9/2017) (hereafter *NUP*); see Klimenchenko, Iurii, *Korabl' idet dal'she*, Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1973, and idem, *Zhizn' i prikliucheniia Long Aleka*, Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1975.

¹² P.S. [Simonov], 'My, Rossiia i voina', *Rabochaia zhizn'*, 14 November 1917, 1.

¹³ [Kliushin, Konstantin], 'Nam goroviat, nas obviniaut ...', *Listok Gruppy rossiiskikh rabochikh*, 6/15 September 1918, 3-8.

¹⁴ Windle, 'Trotskii's Consul', p. 501; idem, 'Pervyi konsul Sovetskoi Rossii', p. 181.

correctly to be from ‘the annals of the Comintern’. However, they are not, despite the quotation marks, in Zuzenko’s own words. What at first sight appears to be a close paraphrase turns out on inspection to be a back-translation from an English version published in Canberra in 2008.¹⁵ Artemov reproduces the back-translation, in quotation marks, with a reference to *NUP* (p. 69, note 153). Further research might have led the *NUP* author, and Artemov himself, to the Comintern collection in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), where the Russian original can be found.

Similarly, three references to Simonov’s letter of 8 April 1921 to the ECCI suggest that the author’s researches stopped short when they might have been carried a little further. The references are to an English translation, with no indication that that translation is to be found in the same English-language collection of Comintern documents as Zuzenko’s report mentioned above.¹⁶ That collection contains much more information on Simonov, and others of his reports to the ECCI from 1920 and 1921, as well as a letter written in 1926, with their RGASPI catalogue numbers. All these have apparently escaped the author’s notice.

Another source repeatedly referred to is a website by Vladimir Krupnik (notes 104, 126, 127, 128). Technically the references are correct, but Krupnik’s site merely republishes Raymond Evans’s 1992 article ‘Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation’, minus its end-notes, adding a version in Russian of part of Evans’s pioneering work, again minus references. Clearly, Evans should be accorded more prominence and his name

¹⁵ Lovell, David and Windle, Kevin (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A Documentary Survey of Relations Between the Communist Party of Australia and Moscow, 1920-1940*, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008, pp. 70-72.

¹⁶ Lovell and Windle, pp. 83-94.

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should appear in Artemov's notes, at least.¹⁷ His work on the Brisbane riots of 1919 was of crucial importance, but more recent studies have corrected some of its errors, for example, on Civa Rosenberg and Fanny, who were not one and the same; Fanny/Fanya was Civa's younger sister. The confusion, which first appeared in an intelligence report from 1918, is perpetuated here, and it is further stated that Civa/Fanny edited the newspaper *Znanie i edinenie* 'in Simonov's absence' (p. 61). It would be closer to the truth to say that Civa was named as nominal editor because her fiancé, Zuzenko, who had been editing it, had been banned from publishing, like Simonov. In fact Zuzenko continued his editorial work, over his fiancée's by-line. The unsigned article in *Znanie i edinenie* quoted as being by Fanny (p. 62), was not by Fanny (or Civa); it was entirely Zuzenko's work. Artemov repeats Krupnik's (Evans's) errors.

There are other small inaccuracies. While not untrue, it is somewhat misleading to state that Simonov was not naturalised in Australia (p. 25: *mestnogo grazhdanstva ne prinimal*), since it is well known that he did in fact apply for naturalisation in April 1915 and swore allegiance to His Majesty King George V, but was refused, unlike Sergeev, who did secure naturalisation.¹⁸ The newspaper *Znanie i edinenie* is given once in its correct form, and once, following Krupnik, as *Znanie i edinstvo* (p. 26). Simonov's *What is Russia* is described as a 'small brochure' (p. 47). It is in fact a book, of 232 pages, published after some delay, in July 1919.¹⁹

¹⁷ See in particular Evans, Raymond, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988; idem, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation', in: McNair, John and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian-Australian Relations*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1992, pp. 125-171.

¹⁸ See NAA: A1 1915/20956, 'Peter K. Fomich Simonoff, Naturalization'.

¹⁹ Simonoff, P., *What is Russia?* Sydney: Worker Trade Union Print, 1919. Arthur Rae edited the author's English and supplied a foreword.

It will be clear from the above that, although the AVPRF files are an important source, the picture they present will be less than complete unless supplemented by a range of others. While Artemov's sources do extend beyond AVPRF and include some essential material, there is more which has not been consulted. The first substantial article dedicated to Simonov, by Eric Fried, is not cited.²⁰ The consul reported not only to the Foreign Ministry: all his messages to the ECCI need to be taken into account. The same applies to the reports to the ECCI of others, in particular Zuzenko, dealing with the same events and personalities. Simonov's articles in the Russian-language press in Queensland, like those of his allies and opponents, are also central to the story. These, with the Australian government's intelligence files and censors' reports on him and other Russian immigrants, should not be overlooked.

The Petrov Affair

Unlike Simonoff, on whom there is limited published material, and archive sources tend to be relatively concentrated, the student of the Petrov affair is confronted by an *embarras de richesses*. A wealth of material has been published in Australia, starting in 1955 with the *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage*, and the transcripts of its proceedings.²¹ In Russia, however, as the author points out, Australia's best-known espionage case remains little known.

The author has little affection for his subject, quoting several pages (pp. 151-157) from the memoirs of one of the Petrovs' MVD colleagues, Zoia Voskresenskaia,

²⁰ Fried, Eric, 'The First Consul: Peter Simonoff and the Formation of the Australian Communist Party', in: McNair, John and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent*, pp. 110-125.

²¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage*, Sydney: Government Printer for NSW, 1955; *Royal Commission on Espionage: Transcript of Proceedings*, Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1954-1955.

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who reserved special odium for them.²² To Voskresenskaia, Petrov was simply an informer and traitor. From the Soviet embassy in Stockholm, where she and the Petrovs were stationed during World War II, Vladimir Petrov sent reports to Moscow not only on the ambassador, Aleksandra Kollontai, and other diplomatic staff, but – beyond the call of duty – also on his colleagues in the intelligence service (p. 153). Voskresenskaia further claims that as a youth he had served a sentence in a juvenile penal colony (p. 142), having had a brief career as a cat-burglar.

The Petrov affair as recounted in this study is very much *parti pris*, refracted through the prism of certain well-known accounts in English. A familiar slant emerges early: Menzies the McCarthyite skilfully ‘plays the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist card’ in the general election of 1954 in order to discredit Labor and the Left, while endeavouring to prove that the Soviet embassy was engaged in espionage (p. 139). H. V. Evatt’s claims of forgery and fabricated evidence supposedly rested on firm ground; the idea of any ‘Soviet spy ring’ was fanciful, and there was no credible Communist threat. Had the range of sources been somewhat wider, and had closer study been applied to some of those to hand, a different picture might have emerged. It is difficult to treat a subject such as this satisfactorily without recourse to the official published records, i.e. the *Report of the Royal Commission* and its transcripts. Artemov’s references, even in a chapter entitled ‘The Royal Commission’, seem to indicate that he had no direct access to either. His principal source, the Russian Foreign Policy Archive, has its uses, of course: the diplomatic correspondence confirms, for example, that the Soviet ambassador in Canberra had named both Petrovs, after Beria’s arrest, as ‘supporters of Beria’ (p. 196). It also shows up tensions between the diplomatic staff and their ‘neighbours’ in the intelligence service (p. 202), and is of use in illuminating the

²² Voskresenskaia, Zoia and Sharapov, Eduard, *Taina Zoi Voskresenskoi*, Moscow: Olma-Press, 1998, http://royallib.com/book/voskresenskaya_zoya/tayna_zoi_voskresenskoy.html (accessed 15 September 2017).

broader political context, e.g. the official Soviet view of relations with Australia, the value of maintaining an embassy there, and of restoring relations in the late 1950s.

However, since the Petrovs' employer was not the Foreign Ministry but the MVD, there are clear limits to the categories and range of information to be found in the AVPRF holdings. Should not the records of the MVD-KGB-FSB also be examined? No doubt it is more difficult to gain access.

Some of the better-known memoirs of participants in the events are cited, notably the Petrovs' own *Empire of Fear* and Michael Bialoguski's *Petrov Story*.²³ Among scholarly works, Robert Manne's *Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage* is quite properly singled out for special tribute ('crammed with facts and profound analysis', p. 133),²⁴ but the author's use of it is oddly selective (see below).

Other works, however, including some of the most authoritative, appear to have been passed over. Michael Thwaites was not simply a 'writer approved by ASIO' (p. 251) to ghost-write the Petrovs' *Empire of Fear*. In addition to being a gifted poet and scholar, he was the ASIO officer who got to know the Petrovs better than most, and whose professional knowledge of the case, set down in his memoir *Truth will Out*,²⁵ had few equals. A chapter in Major Arthur Birse's *Memoirs of an Interpreter* contains much detail on the case by one who had a central role in studying and translating key documents, and in interpreting at the Royal Commission hearings.²⁶ And any study which leaves aside *Breaking the Codes*, by Desmond Ball (no friend of the Right) and David Horner, must seem to have its claim to authority diminished.²⁷

²³ Petrov, Vladimir and Petrov Evdokia *Empire of Fear*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1956; Bialoguski, Michael, *The Petrov Story*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1955.

²⁴ Manne, Robert, *The Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage*, Sydney: Pergamon, 1987.

²⁵ Thwaites, Michael, *Truth will Out*, Sydney, Collins, 1980.

²⁶ Birse, A.H., *Memoirs of an Interpreter*, New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967.

²⁷ Ball, Desmond and Horner, David, *Breaking the Codes*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.

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Like some others before him, Artemov maintains that the gains to Australian intelligence from the material turned over by the Petrovs were of limited value (pp. 216-217, 239, 242): the famous 'H' and 'J' files incriminating their authors Fergan O'Sullivan, Evatt's press secretary, and the journalist Rupert Lockwood demonstrated the readiness of some on the Left to abet the Soviet cause, but did little to actually advance it. To this, Manne has already given the definitive rebuttal. He is in no doubt as to the value of the information brought by the Petrovs, noting, 'only in Australia [...] has the genuine importance of the Petrovs been persistently misunderstood',²⁸ and giving an impressive summary of the nature of that information. Little of it emerged at the Royal Commission; it was obtained during debriefing of the Petrovs over a longer period, and much was withheld: for example, anything that might alert the Soviets to the Venona decrypting operation needed careful protection. That apart, the Petrovs' inside knowledge of the Soviet intelligence agencies, their organisation, procedures, personnel and operations past and present amounted to a priceless windfall for ASIO and its counterparts in Britain, the USA and Canada. According to Ben Macintyre, Petrov's information pointed to a 'defector in place' in Britain (Philby), and he was able to provide 'the names of some six hundred KGB officers working as diplomats'.²⁹

The full catalogue of gains to Western intelligence, if one exists, will be a lengthy document. Manne provides a useful synopsis, adding however that the gains were soon to be nullified by developments on the far side of the world: George Blake, in Britain's MI6, was using his Minox camera to deliver to his Soviet handlers untold numbers of classified documents. After Blake's arrest and imprisonment in 1961,

²⁸ Manne, *Petrov Affair*, pp. 226-227.

²⁹ Macintyre, Ben, *A Spy among Friends*, New York: Crown, 2014, p. 180. See also Thwaites, *Truth Will Out*, p. 131 and Manne, *Petrov Affair*, p. 226.

Brigadier Sir Charles Spry in Canberra would receive an apology from the head of MI6, saying that Blake had sent material from the Petrovs' debriefing to Moscow Centre.³⁰ In due course, having escaped from his London prison and made his way to Moscow, Blake would be awarded the highest Soviet and post-Soviet honours for his services.

It can be seen that Artemov's use of Manne's magisterial study is selective, leaving aside much that sits uneasily with the chosen line of argument. In a striking case of misrepresentation by incomplete quotation, possibly resulting from a misapprehension, we find the following lines from Manne, in fully accurate Russian translation (p. 241): 'None would dispute the proposition that Mr Menzies, with the assistance of ASIO, consciously manipulated the Petrovs' defection for the purpose of achieving a Coalition victory at the polls.' To this Artemov appends his wholehearted endorsement: 'It is impossible to disagree with this assertion.' Those familiar with Manne's book will be surprised to find a statement so plainly at variance with his fundamental thesis. What the reader is not told is that this sentence is from a passage devoted to 'conspiracy theories', and the first part of it is not translated. In fact Manne wrote: 'While the conspiracy theorists may differ on many questions of fact and interpretation, none would dispute ...'³¹ Clearly 'none' is not to be understood as 'nobody at all'; Manne is referring to a much narrower constituency: 'no conspiracy theorist'. Others would certainly dispute this, and Manne himself does so most effectively, contradicting Artemov, but not himself, when he further states that Evatt 'was certainly [...] not justified in believing [...] that Mr Menzies or his colleagues had ruthlessly

³⁰ Manne, *Petrov Affair*, p. 232.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

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used the Petrov defection [...] for political gain in the election of 1954',³² and marshals much evidence in support of this.

Undeterred by such evidence, Artemov cites Evatt's claims of politically motivated forgery, skulduggery and manipulation as if some plausibility still adhered to them (p. 239). While it is certainly the case that they lingered long in the memory of the Left, and have periodically been resurrected, for example by Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs,³³ they have long since been categorically refuted, shown to be a product of Evatt's growing obsession and lacking any sound basis in reality. This latest recycling bears out yet again what Thwaites wrote in 1980, with Evatt's supporters in mind: 'A myth, once thoroughly propagated, seems to have a life as persistent as radio-active waste'.³⁴

The statement that there was 'no spy ring in Australia' (p. 217) appears to be at odds with the book's Russian title, which includes '*seti shpionazha*' (spy networks), and needs to be qualified. Thorough research by several authors, most notably Ball and Horner, has established beyond doubt that in 1943-1949, 'a group of about 10 people, all of whom were members of the Communist Party of Australia or close acquaintances of communists, provided information and documentary material to the Soviet State Security Service.'³⁵ Coral Bell has spoken of the total absence of security in the Department of External Affairs, from which a group of employees regularly removed confidential documents and handed them to Wally Clayton, a leading mem-

³² Ibid., p. 99.

³³ Whitlam, Nicholas and Stubbs, John, *Nest of Spies*, Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974. Artemov does not refer to this book, which has been described by Manne (xii) as 'little more than a spirited piece of partisan journalism'.

³⁴ Thwaites, *Truth Will Out*, p. 13.

³⁵ Ball and Horner, *Breaking the Codes*, p. xiv.

ber of the CPA, who passed them to MVD operatives from the embassy.³⁶ It is true, however, that Brigadier Spry, who spoke of a ring operating successfully in Australia in the years 1945-1948 (that being the reason for the establishment of ASIO), added that in 1949-1954 'according to Petrov, persistent attempts at espionage were, generally speaking, not very successful'.³⁷ By the time Petrov was posted to Canberra, most members of the group identified by Ball and Horner, Thwaites and others were no longer in Canberra.³⁸

O'Sullivan's and Lockwood's services, as evidenced by the contents of Exhibits 'H' and 'J', may not have been great, but to dismiss their efforts as merely a friendly sharing of impressions with fellow-journalists (p. 217) is to under-rate them. The TASS correspondents who gratefully received these papers doubled as MVD agents and passed them to that organisation. Lockwood's 'Document J' (memorably described at the Royal Commission hearings as a 'farrago of facts, falsity and filth') needs fuller treatment. There is more to it than economic and political relations with Japan and USA (p. 216). Artemov does not mention its more controversial section, headed 'Dr Evatt' or its sources.³⁹ Document 'J' and the circumstances of its production drew prolonged attention at the Royal Commission. Lockwood confessed to being the author of part of it, not all of it, thus allowing Evatt to press his claims of ma-

³⁶ Desmond Ball, 'From External Affairs to Academia: Coral's Encounter with the KGB's Spy Ring in Australia', in: Ball, Desmond and Lee, Sheryn (eds), *Power and International Relations: Essays in Honour of Coral Bell*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2014; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13wvvpk.7> (accessed 15 September 2017).

³⁷ Manne, *Petrov Affair*, p. 178.

³⁸ The group named by Ball and Horner includes Jim Hill, Ian Milner, Ric Throssell and his mother Katharine Susannah Prichard, and Fred Rose.

³⁹ See Ball, Desmond, 'I Believe Lockwood Lied to Petrov Commission to Save his Family's Honour', *Australian*, 23 April 2011; and Thwaites, *Truth Will Out*, p. 111. See also *Report of the Royal Commission*, p. 39, on the 'scurrilous and grossly defamatory' nature of parts of Document 'J'.

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nipulation and forgery.⁴⁰ However, at the end of his life Lockwood admitted to Ball that this was not so: he had in fact written the whole document himself, and typed it in the Soviet embassy in Canberra.⁴¹

It is correctly reported that Petrov, like other defectors, was sentenced to death by the Soviet Supreme Court in 1954, but the years passed and nobody came to deal with ‘people who no longer posed any threat to the Soviet state’ (p. 251). Thus to suggest that the Petrovs were in no serious danger from their former employer is misleading. We know that even twenty years later that danger was very real: Oleg Kalugin reports that, when he was head of Soviet Foreign Counter-Intelligence in the mid-1970s, a KGB defector from the 1950s – undoubtedly Petrov – was located in Australia, and Kalugin sought Andropov’s permission to arrange his murder. Andropov replied that, while he would gladly approve such measures for the recent defectors Oleg Lialin and Iurii Nosenko, he was unconcerned about those of earlier times and advised leaving them alone.⁴² Had Kalugin pressed his case, or found Andropov in less benign mood, Petrov might well have joined the ranks of murdered defectors of yore.

Like the chapters dealing with Simonov, those on Petrov are marred by small errors of detail. The British troopship on which the Petrovs were travelling when it was sunk by a U-boat was the *Llandaff Castle*, not ‘Lendfol’ (Лэндфолл касл, p. 151). BOAC stands for British Overseas Airways Corporation, not ‘British Overseas Air Company’ (p. 224). There is some dubious transcription of English personal

⁴⁰ See Manne, *Petrov Affair*, pp. 139-145 on Evatt’s attempts to argue that features of handwriting, typing and stapling pointed to ‘interpolations’.

⁴¹ Ball, ‘I Believe Lockwood Lied’.

⁴² Kalugin, Oleg, *Spymaster*, London: Smith Gryphon, 1994, 238-239. West, Nigel, *The Third Secret*, London: HarperCollins, 2000, p. 43, adds that Evdokiia was traced through letters she had incautiously written to her close relatives in the USSR.

names: the stressed vowels of Эрсман (for Earsman p. 68), Риордан (for Reardon p. 108f.) and Твайтс (for Thwaites p. 251), introduce a phonetic distortion, as does the middle consonant of Шеферд (for Shepherd p. 226). Repeated references to ‘spring’ and ‘summer’ are often contradicted by the months named and indicate a stubbornly northern-hemisphere perspective, e.g. ‘summer 1953 ... the middle of last year’ (p. 234).

Lastly, a bibliography would be helpful, and the value of the work would be greatly enhanced by an index. There is none.

All in all, despite some omissions and deficiencies, this volume does the Russian reader a valuable service as a first introduction to two figures who deserve to be better known. For that reader, it goes some way towards making good the paucity of information previously available, or available only in closed archives. On Simonov, it contributes much that is new, courtesy of AVPRF, while leaving untapped some known sources elsewhere and taking on trust others of highly questionable veracity. The treatment of Petrov yields some new information from the same archive, but falls short in the analysis by leaving out of account some important documents, studies and memoirs published in Australia, while misrepresenting others, in particular Manne. It stands as a useful beginning, which will profit from further research, with revision and expansion in both its parts, preferably as two separate books.

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Jim Hlavac, *Three Generations, Two Countries of Origin, One Speech Community: Australian-Macedonians and their Language(s)*, Leipzig: Biblion Media & München, Berlin, Leipzig, Washington/D.C.: Kubon & Sagner 2016 (Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe, ed. by Christian Voß, vol. 25), 556 pp.

In 2003 Jim Hlavac of Monash University published a benchmark study of code switching based on a study of Croatian-English bilinguals in Australia (*Second-Generation Speech: Lexicon, Code-Switching and Morpho-Syntax of Croatian-English Bilinguals*, Bern: Peter Lang). In recent years he has turned his attention to the Macedonian community in Australia, and this lengthy new publication documents some of his results. The title of the book is a deliberate reference to Li Wei's 1994 book *Three Generations, Two Languages, One Family: Language Choice and Language Shift in a Chinese Community in Britain*. Macedonian is the twelfth most widely spoken language in Australia and the best maintained European language. The ready availability of Macedonian-language media in Australia may contribute to this (cf. p. 403). High rates of endogamy (p. 403) and attendance at Macedonian-language church services are probably other factors (p. 405). Beyond the family/home domain, Macedonian plays a functional role in the friendship and social domain and in the occupational, transactional and neighbourhood domains.

The term *speech community* is controversial, because it was sometimes interpreted in an essentialist way, a speech community being 'conceived of as a discrete, definable entity' (p. 17). This would be particularly problematic in the case of the Macedonian speakers in Australia. The term *speech community* is thus conceived of as an 'amalgam of linguistic features, together with a coalescence of social group fea-

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tures' (p. 19). 'Full speakers' of a language rarely dispute the membership of 'semi-speakers' or 'non-speakers'. Members of a speech community need not share a common ethnicity, and this is certainly true of the Macedonian speakers in Australia.

Chapter 2 deals with the theory of sociolinguistic domains, Chapter 3 is devoted to a detailed history of 'Macedonia, the Macedonian language and Macedonian speakers'. The latter includes amusing references to some of the quainter 'theories' put forward by some Greek 'scholars' trying to explain the Macedonian language out of existence.

Hlavac based his study on written questionnaires as well as extended interviews conducted by Chris Popov. Nearly 100 informants were contacted by Popov using his social, community and local neighbourhood ties, while a few, mostly third-generation informants, were contacted by the author through his long-term contacts among Aegean Macedonians (p. 132). The study makes no claim to the representativity of the sample of informants or for the 29,383 residents of Melbourne that reported speaking Macedonian as their home language (p. 132). Macedonian was the language used for first-generation informants, for second and third-generation informants questionnaires were provided and completed in English. Potential informants were any persons that considered themselves speakers of Macedonian or considered that they had proficiency in Macedonian, regardless of how much they spoke the language or to what level (p. 126). 'Speakers of Macedonian' thus included people with a different ethnic consciousness (e.g., Greek). The book offers perspectives on different groups, stratified according to generation and country of origin (Greece or the Republic of Macedonia). Firstly, Hlavac elicited information on language use in nine domains across the three generations. Second, he obtained responses to an ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire that contained questions about informants' views of Macedonian Australians and other groups. And the third perspective related to questions about lan-

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guage maintenance and the place and value of language as a tangible entity in speakers' lives. The book also includes maps showing the distribution of informants across the municipalities of Melbourne (p.134) and a hierarchical representation of four 'post-1913 generations' of Macedonians, including the three generations of informants in this study (those born 1913-1935, 1930-1955, 1955-1980, 1980-2005). The questionnaires as well as sample transcripts of interviews and details of publicly available recordings on YouTube are included among the appendices at the close of the volume. There are lengthy summaries in English, Macedonian and Greek.

Macedonian speakers rate their home dialect in the most positive terms, followed by Standard Macedonian, and then Australian English. For informants of all generations, Macedonian still occupies the role of a functional code and is also rated as 'warm', 'familiar', 'beautiful', etc. The ability to relate referential content matter with relative ease in Macedonian is something that all first-generation informants and most second-generation speakers have. For third-generation speakers there are gaps in their command of different registers but there are few restriction on their communicative fluency and they are relatively unrestricted in using Macedonian to convey referential content. Performance among thrid-generation speakers is reflective of the discourse, setting and interlocutors. However, Macedonian speakers perceive themselves, or their speech community, as less robust than the sociolinguistic data suggest. This may be due partly to discriminatory policies adopted by the Victorian and Australian Governments in the 1990s, so that Macedonians felt that their standing and prestige were, in some respects, subordinate to that of others.

Eliciting information using a written questionnaire from informants that may be only marginally literate is somewhat problematical. The second critical point is the language used: should it be standard Macedonian (which may be unfamiliar to many speakers from Greece), dialectal (Aegean) Macedonian (Lerin or Kostur) or 'Australi-

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an Macedonian' (with some elements of English involved)? The addition '*and their language(s)*' in the title of the book hints at this question. Hlavac seems to have taken an undogmatic attitude, but there may have been instances when Chris Popov was interviewing elderly informants from Aegean Macedonia where they did not quite understand his question.

There are some fascinating 'vignettes' scattered throughout the book, accounts of situations that Hlavac observed in Melbourne over the years. It is a comely volume, well bound and well printed.

As to the background information on the Macedonian language (Chapter 3, p. 80), it is generally accepted that Cyril and Methodius were the authors of the Glagolitic alphabet. Cyrillic (a misnomer) was invented later. The transliteration used in the book includes an apostrophe for supposed instances of ellipsis, but in fact, for instance, the third-person plural direct object pronoun in Aegean Macedonia is /i/, derived from /ih/, while the /g/ in the standard-language form /gi/ has been added by analogy with the singular pronoun /go/. There is thus no ellipsis. Using the grapheme <ä> to denote the central vowel /ə/ is a bit confusing, although it has an odd parallel in Azerbaijani orthography, where the grapheme <ə> is used to represent the phoneme /æ/. On p.130 Hlavac cites Hill 2015, but this title is missing from the bibliography. The book employs the new bizarre spelling convention whereby a hyphen is used to link an adverb with the attributive adjective that it modifies ('publicly-available'), while omitting the hyphen from complex attributes ('social group features').

The results of this study are many and varied and a short review cannot do justice to them all. This is certainly another benchmark study.

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S. Evdokimova and V. Golstein (eds.), *Dostoevsky beyond Dostoevsky: Science, Religion, Philosophy*, Academic Studies Press: Boston, MA, 2016, 413 pp.

Dostoevsky beyond Dostoevsky is a book in the *Ars Rossica* series published by Academic Studies Press, a growing series numbering sixteen titles at time of writing. The publishers have engaged distinguished authors that include J. A. E. Curtis, Caryl Emerson, Mikhail Epstein, Mark Lipovetsky, Gary Saul Morson, Boris Uspenskij, and Andrei Zorin on other titles. For the most part, the contributors to this book's twenty-one chapters are senior academics, largely from east coast US universities and colleges, although there are a couple of contributions from Canada and one each from Russia and Kazakhstan.

The editors, Svetlana Evdokimova and Vladimir Golstein — both from Brown University — have worked hard to provide a broad canvas on which contributors have managed to position Dostoevsky's engagement with science, metaphysics, axiology, identity and culture. The editors state their aim explicitly on page 3 of the introduction: 'The primary goal of this volume is ... to consider Dostoevsky's real or imagined dialogues with the aesthetic, philosophic, and scientific thoughts of his predecessors, contemporaries and heirs'. The collection of essays is divided into five sections reflecting these areas of engagement: 'Encounters with Science', 'Engagements with Philosophy', 'Questions of Aesthetics', 'The Self and the Other' and 'Intercultural Connections'. The comprehensive introduction manages the positioning of these five elements adroitly and coherently, and, in general, the collection of essays manages to achieve its goal.

However, the very nature of a collection of essays involves a compromise. This compromise arises from its positioning along a spectrum that ranges between homogeneity and heterogeneity. If the essays are, in aggregate, tightly thematic, the

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reader knows what she is in for. If, however, the subject matter is more diffuse, the collection's appeal to the reader and hence her/his engagement is more likely to vary from essay to essay. In the case of *Dostoevsky beyond Dostoevsky*, the reader has to confront five parts that address different domains of knowledge, a number of which need quite different methodologies to unpack their problems. Some of these domains are contiguous, but others are so far apart that only the introduction can connect them.

This situation has its pros and cons. Its advantages are that *anyone* with an interest in Dostoevsky would find at least a few essays that proved absorbing. Its disadvantages are that few readers would find themselves able to move across the range of disciplinary areas with a high degree of comfort. However, from a Bakhtinian point of view, this degree of variety certainly results in a fertile heteroglossia of voices.

Because he is such a rich and complex author, Fedor Dostoevsky's oeuvre has provided a motherlode for theorists in many fields to mine — psychology, linguistics, narratology to name a few — and in the case of *Dostoevsky beyond Dostoevsky*: science, religion and philosophy. When confronted by such a collection of essays, I sometimes find it hard to know how to proceed. Mostly I am looking for an individual piece; sometimes a specific author is my target; very occasionally I am looking for a particular editor or translator. In these latter instances, a book provides a satisfactory resource when it is tightly themed or coherently reflects the perspective for which I am searching. These resources tend not to be diffuse, nor do they tend to cover an excessively wide slice of the domain they aim to discuss.

I found three essays in this collection particularly stimulating. The first was that of Steven Cassedy (UCSD) on 'Dostoevsky and the Meaning of "the Meaning of Life"' in the 'Engagements with Philosophy' part. For me, this opened up a number of non-Russian contexts of this question, especially relating to Dostoevsky's debt to the German hermeneutic tradition.

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The remaining two essays were in the part entitled 'Intercultural Connections'. The piece by Olga Meerson (Georgetown) on 'Raskolnikov and the *Aqeda* (Isaac's Binding)' makes some persuasive arguments for the close textual relationship linking Genesis 22: 1-13 and a passage in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*. This is based on a process of close reading that I find absorbing. And finally, Marina Kostalevsky (Bard College) provides a fascinating piece ('Prince Myshkin's Night Journey: Chronotope as a Symptom') that discusses the nature of various types of temporality in *The Idiot*. It achieves this by connecting Prince Myshkin's perception of time with that of Muhammad's night journey (the *Isra* and *Mi'raj*), based on a life of the Prophet by Washington Irving. Other pieces also provided me with food for thought in varying degrees.

In summary, I found this book extremely enjoyable to read, although it is not without its idiosyncrasies. For instance, I am not comfortable with Cyrillic and transliterated Russian appearing on the same page. This seems to be an 'either/or' rather than a 'both/and' issue. The only justification I could summon for this editorial decision was that somehow the Cyrillic was included for Slavists, whereas the transliterated Russian was included for the general reader. However, this did not appear to be borne out by the text. Although the occasional note of self-conscious erudition got in the way of the reader's understanding at certain points in the collection, overall I found the twenty-one essays very readable, in both length and style. The editorial work, with very few exceptions, was excellent. This volume will appeal to Dostoevsky specialists with a broad range of interests, though doubtless some sections will be more attractive to individual readers than others.

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Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia, 1757-1881*, London: Yale University Press, 2016, 380 pp, incl. 135 col. + 155 b. & w. illustrations.

In the age of Perestroika, Russian art gained a sudden burst of popularity in the West with a plethora of exhibitions and publications. This proved to be an ephemeral phenomenon and, as Russophobia reasserted itself, so returned the scarcity of serious publications on Russian art. The Russian avant-garde, including Kazimir Malevich, Natalia Goncharova, Wassily Kandinsky and Marc Chagall, retained their status of evergreen favourites in international art exhibitions, as have a few, largely expatriate contemporary artists, but much of the grand tradition of Russian art was once more largely neglected.

Rosalind Blakesley's *The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia, 1757-1881* is a welcome publication that focuses on the creation of a 'national school' of Russian painting from the formation of the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg in 1757 to the assassination of tsar Alexander II in St Petersburg in 1881 by members of the Narodnaia Volia. In keeping with many revisionist histories of recent years, Blakesley argues for a rehabilitation of the Academy and academic practices, and for them as laying the foundations for a national school of painting culminating in Russian realism in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Blakesley's book is divided into two parts. The first 'focuses on processes of education, starting with edification that the Academy aimed to provide in an openly patriotic bid to foster a national school.' In the second, the Academy remains centre stage, but the individual chapters examine Russian artists working abroad; artists who worked primarily outside the Academy; a chapter on the maverick Pavel Fedotov; one on the Association of Travelling Exhibitions, with a final chapter dealing with Russian women artists of the time, which, as the author admits, 'runs the risk of ghettoising

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them'. The scholarship is forensic, drawing on Russian, Soviet and Western sources as well as archival holdings in Russia and the study of artworks in Russian metropolitan and regional collections. The documentation is dense and the reproductions are of high quality with many rarely reproduced in Western publications.

The traditional argument on the role of the Imperial Academy of Arts, as outlined in I.I. Bekker, I.A. Brodskii and S.K. Isakov, *Akademiia khudozhestv: Istorieskii ocherk* (1940), was that it was a bastion of conservative art and that many of its values were overthrown with the emergence of a group of realist artists called the Peredvizhniki (sometimes translated as The Wanderers or The Itinerants). These artists decided to rebel and leave the Academy and formed an artists' cooperative that evolved into the *Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions* in 1870. Soviet scholars, including Nina Moleva, Olga Evangulova and Tatiana Alekseeva, as well as the more contemporary Russian scholars, including Elena Nesterova, Grigorii Goldovskii, Lidia Iovleva, Zh. Alferov, Sergei Androsov, Ia. V Bruk, Irina Danilova and the indefatigable Dmitry Sarabianov, have presented a more rounded and more carefully argued case for the role of the Academy and the artists who emerged from its ranks. In the West, some of the main contributors include James Cracraft's several books on art under Peter the Great, Alison Hilton's publications and Elizabeth Valkenier's numerous contributions on Russian realist painters.

Blakesley documents the peculiar historical conditions – with the battles and political intrigues – that lay behind the founding of the Academy of Arts in 1757, which resulted in the creation of a Francophile establishment in its teachers, constitutional structure and categories of membership. However, it was similar to the British Royal Academy, in that instruction was fully state-funded for matriculated students, and, shortly after its creation, it offered a boarding school for its students. Graduates

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were certified as competent in the visual arts and were granted considerable privileges, and were almost guaranteed employment.

This saw the establishment of a school of Russian painters largely working for the court or courtly patrons who gained not only technical competence on a par with their Western counterparts, but who also developed national characteristics. The *Peredvizhniki* may have revolted against the restrictive élitist nature of the Academy and its focus on esoteric subject matter, but in most instances in their training they were dependent on academic principles that they now applied to specifically Russian subject matter, including the Russian landscape, toiling peasants and folk traditions.

An element in Russian visual culture that is somewhat downplayed in this account is the role of icon-painting and the folk arts, especially the *lubok* (popular prints), which were to play such a central role in the emergence of the Russian avant-garde. If the Academy belonged to official courtly art, there also existed this subterranean strand in Russian art that continued over the centuries. A number of the artists trained as icon-painters or at least had experience of icon-painting, which asserted itself in the art of the Ballets Russes and many manifestations of Russian art that flourished in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

Rosalind Blakesley has presented us with an exceptionally valuable and meticulously researched account of the academic tradition of Russian painting. It opens, particularly to English readers, an aspect of Russian art that had not been examined previously in such painstaking detail, and with such knowledge and passion.

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IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS POOLE

Tom Poole, formerly lecturer and senior lecturer in Russian history at the University of Queensland and a pioneer in the study of Russian-Australian relations, died in Armidale NSW on 28 June, 2016. The following appreciation, abstracted from his recent article in the St Petersburg journal Klio (176.2(122)/2017, 175-181) has been contributed by his colleague Alexander Massov, of the St Petersburg State Maritime Technical University and the State University of St Petersburg and edited by John McNair.

Thomas Ray Poole was born in 1936 in Schenectady NY, USA. In 1958 he graduated from Princeton University and was drafted into the army, completing the Russian language course at the US Army Translating and Interpreting School in Monterey. It was there he first conceived the interest in Russia, her history and culture that remained with him throughout his life. In 1968 he began postgraduate work at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and in 1974 was awarded a Ph.D. for a thesis on the Dewey Commission of Enquiry into the charges levelled against Trotsky at the Moscow show trials. Later that year he arrived to take up a lectureship in history at the University of Queensland, where he was to remain until his retirement in 2001. A gifted teacher, Tom developed a strong and popular suite of courses in Russian and Soviet history, and latterly played a leading role in implementing major innovations in the general undergraduate curriculum, most notably with his course 'The History of the Future'. Russian history in all its aspects, however, remained his great enthusiasm – an enthusiasm he communicated to generations of students.

His research interests came to focus on a topic which before his arrival on the scene had received little serious attention in Australian historiography: the history of

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Russian-Australian relations. In 1985, together with his colleague Eric Fried, he published in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* a ground-breaking article entitled 'Artyom: a Bolshevik in Brisbane', devoted to F.A. Sergeev, an associate of Lenin who lived in exile in Brisbane in 1911-1917 and as leader of the Union of Russian Emigrés sought to radicalise the Russian diaspora and carve for himself a role in the Australian workers' movement. In the early 1990s, in another notable article, Poole turned his attention to the establishment of Soviet-Australian diplomatic relations in 1942, and to the contribution of the first Australian ambassador to the USSR, William Slater. Acknowledging that these first steps in relations between the two countries were not altogether successful, Poole took up the story of their further development during the war years in a later article on the moral, humanitarian and political support extended by both ordinary Australians and their government to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945. Modest as this may have been in practical terms, it nevertheless provided a background to the ups and downs which characterised relations in the succeeding decades.

Poole's research was always based on an exhaustive command of and meticulous approach to his sources, and he was one of the first Australian historians to work extensively in a number of Russian archive repositories, such as the Foreign Affairs Archive of the Russian Empire in Moscow and the Russian State Naval Archives in St Petersburg. Like many Australian humanities academics, he struggled at times to reconcile the competing demands of consistent research productivity with those of a heavy teaching load, but this in no way detracts from the quality and originality of his work – a case in point being the articles published (as it happens, in Russian journals) towards the end of his career on the pro-fascist sympathies of certain elements in Australia's Russian community during the immediate pre-war period and the war years, a contentious topic never before the subject of serious scholarly attention.

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Tom Poole's most notable achievement was without doubt his contribution in stimulating and promoting within the Australian academic community interest in the study of Russian-Australian relations. It was largely thanks to his initiative that from 1985 the University of Queensland developed those academic links with the Department of South Pacific Studies of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences which culminated (already after the dissolution of the USSR) in the publication of *Russia and the Fifth Continent*, compiled and edited by Poole and his UQ colleague John McNair, bringing together essays by leading Russian specialists on Australian studies (K.V. Malakhovsky, A.S. Petrikovskaya, A.V. Chuyko, N.A. Butinov) and by prominent Australian specialists like Manning Clark, Harry Rigby, Charles Price, Ray Evans and Boris Christa. Two decades later, in the lead-up to the bicentenary of the establishment of Russian-Australian contacts, celebrated in 2007, another joint publication was planned, prepared and published, again in large measure due to Poole's efforts. *Encounters under the Southern Cross: Two Centuries of Russian-Australian Relations, 1807-2007* was compiled and edited by Thomas Poole, John McNair and Alexander Massov. Contributors on the Russian side included A.S. Petrikovskaya, G.I. Kanevskaya, Yu.D. Aksyonov and Ambassador L.P. Moiseev; and on the Australian Elena Govor, Kevin Windle, Graham Gill and David Lovell. This is the first monograph in Russian and Australian historiography to attempt a comprehensive and multidisciplinary survey of Russian-Australian relations over the whole period of their existence, drawing on a vast range of archival sources, newspaper files, memoirs and reminiscences, many of them published for the first time.

Mention must also be made of the outstanding collection of documents on Russian-Australian relations assembled by Poole and deposited by him (together with materials collected by his friend and colleague Eric Fried while conducting research on the activities of Russian revolutionaries resident in Queensland after the 1905

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revolution) in the Fryer Collection of the University of Queensland Library shortly before his retirement. After processing and cataloguing, the Poole-Fried collection is now available to all interested researchers. It includes xerox- and photocopies of materials in the national archives of Australia and Russia, cuttings from the press of both countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reminiscences by Russian immigrants and photographs connected with the Russian diaspora in Australia. This is one further reason why the memory of this fine Australian scholar deserves to be remembered both by Russian Australianists and by all those engaged in the study of Russia in Australia.

Notes on Contributors

D.N. Akharkin (Денис Николаевич Ахапкин), кандидат филологических наук, преподает на факультете свободных искусств и наук СПбГУ, возглавляет Центр письма и критического мышления, руководит общеобразовательной. Его научные интересы включают поэзию и прозу Иосифа Бродского, русскую литературу XX века, лингвистику, когнитивную поэтику (в частности исследования метафоры и дейксиса в художественном тексте), теоретические и практические аспекты либерального образования. Автор книги *Иосиф Бродский: после России* (2009), публиковался в журналах *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, *Russian Literature*, *Новое литературное обозрение*, *Звезда*. Был стипендиатом колледжума Университета Хельсинки (весенний семестр 2007) и Русского центра имени Екатерины Дашковой в Университете Эдинбурга (осенний семестр 2014). Ассоциированный преподаватель Института письма и мышления Бард-колледжа (США).

Georgina Barker works on the Russian reception of classical antiquity. She was a Wolfson Postgraduate Scholar at the University of Edinburgh, where she wrote her PhD thesis, titled ‘Russia’s Classical Alter Ego, 1963-2016: Classical Reception in the Poetry of Elena Shvarts, Il’ia Kutik, and Polina Barskova’. She has a master’s degree in Modern Languages from the University of Bristol, and a bachelor’s degree in Latin and Russian from Oxford University.

Zakhar Ishov was born in St Petersburg and moved with his family to Berlin in the early 1990s. He has two doctoral degrees: one in Russian literature (with a minor in Italian literature) from Yale University, for the dissertation ‘Joseph Brodsky & Italy’ completed in December 2015 under the guidance of Tomas Venclova; and one in

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English literature and Translation Studies from FU Berlin (*summa cum laude*) (2008) for his thesis: 'Post-Horse of Civilization: Joseph Brodsky Translating Joseph Brodsky'. In 2016 he was awarded a one-month visiting fellowship at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian studies (UCRS). In 2009 he was a recipient of the Charles Hall Grandgent Award from The Dante Society of America for the best graduate essay on Mandelstam and Dante. He has organized and participated in several panels and published articles on translation and comparative studies as well as on the classical legacy in Russia. His co-translation of a Joseph Brodsky poem 'With a View of the Sea' with British poet Glyn Maxwell was published in *The New York Review of Books* in April 2013. He currently holds a one-year post-doctoral research position within the Excellence Initiative Program at the University of Tübingen.

Alexandra Smith is Reader in Russian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include literary and film theory, critical theory, Russian literature of the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, intermediality and the history of ideas. Alexandra is the author of *The Song of the Mockingbird: Pushkin in the Works of Marina Tsvetaeva* (1994) and *Montaging Pushkin: Pushkin and Visions of Modernity in Russian Twentieth-Century Poetry* (2006). Her co-edited book (with Katharine Hodgson and Jo Shelton), *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon* was published in 2017. She has also written numerous articles on Russian literature and culture, as well as European and American literature. Her co-authored book (with Katharine Hodgson) on twentieth-century Russian poetry and will be published in 2018.

Olga Sobolev is a Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her research interests are in nineteenth- and twentieth century Russian and European culture, focusing on Modernism and transitional

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periods in the development of Russian artistic thought. Recent publications include: *From Orientalism to Cultural Capital: The Myth of Russia in British Literature of the 1920s* (with Angus Wrenn, Peter Lang, 2017); 'The Symbol of the Symbolists: Alexander Blok in the Changing Russian Literary Canon', in *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinvention of the Canon* (Cambridge, Open Books Publishers, 2017); 'Reception of Alfred Tennyson in Russia' in *The Reception of Tennyson in Europe* (Bloomsbury, 2016); *The Only Hope of the World: G B Shaw and Russia* (with Angus Wrenn, Peter Lang, 2012); *The Silver Mask: Harlequinade in Symbolist Poetry* (2008) and articles on Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Nabokov, Boris Akunin and Victor Pelevin.

Olga Voronina is Associate Professor of Russian at Bard College, NY. She has a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Harvard University and an M.A. from the Herzen Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg. A former Deputy Director of the Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg, she co-edited and co-translated, with Brian Boyd, Vladimir Nabokov's *Letters to Véra*. Her essays on Nabokov, Soviet media discourse of the Cold War, and Soviet and post-Soviet children's literature have appeared in a variety of American and Russian journals. She is currently working on a book manuscript, 'Memory's Sacred Places: Literary Museums and the Evolution of Russia's Historical Imagination', and is editing *The Brill Companion to Children's Literature and Film*.

David N. Wells is Manager, Collections, at Curtin University Library. He is the author of two books on the poetry of Anna Akhmatova (*Akhmatova and Pushkin: The Pushkin Contexts of Akhmatova's Poetry* (1994) and *Anna Akhmatova: Her Poetry* (1996)), and the editor of *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904-05* (with Sandra Wilson, 1999), *Russian Views of Japan, 1792-1913* (2004) and *Themes*

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and Variations in Slavic Languages and Cultures (2008). His articles include studies of Akhmatova, Balmont, Bely, Merezhkovskii, Aleksandr Kushner, Semen Lipkin, A.D. Hope and Thomas Hardy.

Kevin Windle is an Emeritus Fellow in the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics at the Australian National University. His recent publications include the monograph *Undesirable: Captain Zuzenko and the Workers of Australia and the World* and *From St Petersburg to Port Jackson: Russian Travellers' Tales of Australia 1807-1912* (co-edited with Elena Govor and Alexander Massov).

Josephine von Zitzewitz is presently teaching Russian at the University of Bristol, having previously held a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at the University of Cambridge and a lectureship at the University of Oxford. Her monograph on samizdat poetry, *Poetry and the Leningrad Religious-Philosophical Seminar 1974-1980: Music for a Deaf Age*, was published by Routledge/Legenda in 2016, and she has written several articles on poetry and late Soviet culture. A volume on samizdat journals as social networks and samizdat reading culture is in print. Her second passion is translation, and she is planning a new project bringing together Russian poets, scholars and translators.